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# Riverside Educational Monographs

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## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

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TO MY CO-WORKERS



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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THERE is a sense in which the subject of reading is the most important study in the elementary school. The need to teach children to read created the school. So long as men learn to do and to know chiefly through their own acts, spontaneous or in imitation of others, the institution of apprenticeship suffices. When it becomes important that youth should know what their elders have experienced, the informal telling of the story is enough. But when men are to be guided by poets, seers, and statesmen, long since dead, they must have recourse to the written or the printed record. And the use of the wide ranges of experience that literacy allows means that the power to read must be taught by a teacher in more or less continuous contact with the child. One may "pick up" skill by watching a workman; one may learn the common speech by ordinary association with men who work and talk; but one can never learn to read by looking at a book over the shoulder of the reader. The marks are too conventional and the reader's vicarious experi-

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ences are unseen. The reader must step aside from his own business to reveal his mind and the established sense of the black marks before him. When he does this he has created a school. Historically, the first schools were reading schools.

Even in the modern school, however different it may be from its progenitor, the obligation to teach children to learn through reading is its outstanding technical function. No one who is discreet in thought believes that an illiterate man is completely ignorant. The illiterate man can learn through direct participation, that is, through doing. He can even learn vicariously, through indirect participation; that is, through the experiences of those with whom he talks from hour to hour. What illiteracy means is that he cannot learn from that largest body of accumulated wisdom, the knowledge and idealism stored in books. It is the school, superimposed on a life of action and conversation, which teaches him to read so that the deeds of the whole world are added to his own life, and the whole of history put alongside his own short acquaintance with reality. The literate man is one who has the largest potential experience at command for the guidance of his own career.

In so far as the modern school is an experience-

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giving institution, it may well make its life more largely active and objective, with more of sociable conversation in it; for these are the natural and vital ways by which men and women, as well as children, learn. They are, indeed, necessary as a basis for that less vital appreciation of life which comes through the printed page. But while the experiences they give are clutching, their extent is limited. Through doing one learns from his own individual life; through conversation, from the group in which he is a member; but from books one has all civilization at command. Learning through reading is the third and largest circle of experience into which the growing life of the child reaches.

So far as the analysis of the educative function of reading has a bearing on teaching methods, it emphasizes the purpose of thought-getting. The prime function of reading is to gain an experience, to derive a meaning, to share in the writer's thoughts. Whatever mechanics of printing and pronunciation need to be learned, ought, of course, to be mastered. But their acquisition should never be allowed to obscure the central and motivating function of thought-acquisition. Whatever active, objective, pictorial, or oral exercises enter the reading period must be treated

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as mere preliminaries, and the teacher must be certain to arrive at the chief business in hand; in fact it should not be forgotten even temporarily. This is not to imply that the reading of books — any books laid down in the course of study — is the chief thing. One generally reads to some purpose, to some problem which arises in the normal course of life. The child's active life is the center, not the reader or supplementary text. Nevertheless, the reading period, as an hour set aside for thought-getting must have its own special functions. It is not a place to drag in dramatizations and games for their own sake. The wise teacher will, when possible, select reading matter that is new and yet within the appreciation of the pupils. If no such easily readable reading matter bearing on the children's problems is at hand, then it will be necessary to give an active and oral basis for that particular reading. Otherwise the reading will not be thoughtful.

The redemption of reading from the dull status of a formal and mechanical drill with letters, syllables, phonics, and diacritics is already well under way. The change has been due in part to a common-sense view of the actual uses of reading in life, and again to a scientific psychology and a rational pedagogy which have emerged from

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the laboratory and experimental school to show the futility of much of the traditional faith in artificialities of teaching method and to give a sanction to natural, thoughtful, and interesting ways of teaching children to read.

The monograph here presented bears on the problem of teaching primary children to read, a field where dullness has hitherto reigned. It is offered as a set of concrete, practical suggestions which the teacher may follow in the faith that it has the best of modern investigation behind its selection of methods. A general treatise might have been written in its stead, were it not for the fact that the most pressing demand has come from primary teachers rather than from principals, supervisors, and superintendents. Teachers, while interested in the mooted questions and scientific evidences bearing on them, have the more immediate interest of wishing to know what they ought specifically to do. This monograph, then, with all its suggestions of procedures, is a practicable application of the best contemporaneous theory on teaching children to read.



# READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

## I

### READING AS A THOUGHT PROCESS

#### *Teaching a beginner to read*

FOR thousands of years the precious art of reading has been taught by an older generation to a younger. Probably any intelligent reader, old or young, can teach reading to any child of average intelligence. Indeed by special methods it is possible to teach the moron, the higher grade of sub-normal child, to read. Present-day conditions make the teaching of reading a mass problem, rather than an individual one, however. What help can be given the teacher, experienced or inexperienced, so that she may secure increasingly better results in reading at a gradual reduction of time cost and nerve cost?

The value which the child himself feels that he is getting from his reading is probably the truest test of results. But so elusive is this qual-

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ity that the average teacher may have no means of discovering its existence; the literature of reading methods needs to emphasize it more and more. The points to be considered are: motive on the part of the pupil, richness and amount of reading material, making the most of the thought, development of a method of study, and results of reading upon activities and character.

Reading is a thought process. This we have long believed, and it is a common cry that the child must have material rich in content placed in his hands, that he must be trained to get the thought from it. There are many types of thinking, however, and much remains to be done to show how each of these types may be utilized in teaching children to read.

Mastery of form is essential in learning to read. To the inexperienced teacher this seems to be the greatest stumbling-block. The experienced teacher is in danger, especially in the intermediate grades, either of failing to have her pupils master form, or of wasting much time in the process because of her use of antiquated methods. Modern methods are in large measure the result of experimentation in the psychological laboratory. These experiments have done much and promise to do more to help us in economizing time cost

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and nerve cost in form mastery. They have aroused us to the importance of rate as a factor in reading, have suggested new methods of word analysis, and have emphasized the deadening effects of fatigue.

To those who enjoy reading and are fond of children, the teaching of children to read is an occupation abounding in delight in spite of the hard work involved. To the teacher who is also a student will appear fascinating problems to solve in this field, until we shall evolve a scientific method of teaching reading. The time has passed when the exploitation of any one's pet method may be carried on successfully for any length of time, but every contribution of real worth is sure to receive very genuine recognition.

### *The pupil's motive in reading*

Emmy Lou spent a long time in juggling with the queer process called reading, before the small boy's valentine, with its personal appeal, aroused in her the need to read its message. What efforts she put forth to find what it said! How she rejoiced in its mastery! Some such feeling of need, some personal relation to the reading material, is the motive which a pupil must have if he is to attack his reading lesson with energy and rejoice

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in its accomplishment. With a strong motive interest is raised to the *n*th power, meanings appear which would otherwise be lost entirely, and difficulties of form take their rightful, subordinate place. The teacher who is ignorant of the tremendous power of motive, will find her work greatly lessened if she will study to discover worthy motives for the reading work in her class.

Reading may form *a basis for activity*. This is one of the strongest motives for reading throughout the grades, particularly for the motor type of child. The beginner reads the simple action words to himself, and carries out the action mentioned: *Run; Skip; Fly; Hop*. He enters into the game the directions for which are written on the board: *Play you are birds; Fly to your nests; Fly to the meadow; Pick up seeds*. The older pupil reads that he may dramatize, that he may illustrate by pantomime.

Reading may *recall experience, it may bring one the experience of others*. The personal element brings this motive very closely home to the pupil. Moreover, recall is a valuable type of mental activity, and it is well worth while for the child to return again and again to those experiences which are of value. For the little children the

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teacher, with their help, may write such simple accounts as: —

*Christmas is coming.*

*Santa Claus will soon be here.*

*He is getting his toys ready.*

*We are making presents for Christmas.*

*John made a box for mother.*

Our newer readers have charming accounts of children's birthdays, of visits to the park or to the farm, while circus day and the zoo are presented again and again. Older pupils find their own experiences the basis for much of their enjoyment in reading, whether it be of the travel and science types, or such an account of a dramatization as is given in Aldrich's account of the Rivermouth theater.

Reading may *furnish enjoyment*. This is especially true of the stories and poems which appeal to the imagination, though it is also true of much informational material. The small boy likes to read of Jack the Giant-Killer because "he is so real," and the eighth-grade pupil enjoys Julius Cæsar in much the same way. This is one of the safest ways for him to enlarge his experience, provided the reading material is wisely chosen. Emotions which he needs to express are studied

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in an impersonal way through their portrayal in literary characters. So ideals are formed, while the inner life of the pupil remains sacred, unrevealed to teacher and classmates.

The motive of *sharing* is one which may well be emphasized far more in our schoolrooms. Pupils may read to their classmates selections found in books not used by all, they may read to their parents selections mastered in school, while assembly programs and other special occasions may well include reading as a desirable feature. The sick, the aged, the shut-in, may also be found in the school neighborhood and made happy by this means.

The motive of *mastery* makes a strong appeal in higher grades. Many teachers find it helpful with little children. The relation which suggestion has in arousing the sense of mastery is worth considering. We read of the remarkable results which Mrs. Wesley accomplished with her children, teaching each the alphabet in a single day. One cannot but wonder, however, whether that day's rich experience was not merely the starting-point. It may be that the strong feeling of accomplishment aroused in that memorable day, furnished a sense of mastery which tinged all future effort with a suggestion of success. We are

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told that when one has mastered a single symbol he has the key to all reading.

### *Choice and amount of reading material*

Every teacher needs to feel a personal responsibility for the richness and amount of reading material in which her pupils are to find opportunity for growth in reading. Like Sentimental Tommy she must "find a way," whether the basic text is inane, the supplementary readers scanty, or the course of study prescriptive.

Nothing but the best is good enough for our purpose, and it is easily possible to learn what is considered the best. The teacher must cultivate her own taste and judgment. Lists are published by several of our libraries: Chubb's *The Teaching of English*, McMurry's *Special Method in Reading*, and other works on reading give excellent suggestions; while numerous courses of study contain lists of books, poems, and stories tested in the schools of our cities.

Within reasonable limits the teacher should have large liberty of choice. There must be no infringing on the work of a later grade, though the class might well re-read selections from an earlier grade which bear upon the selection which they are studying.

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Neighborhood interests, world happenings, other lines of school work, ought to help determine what shall be read and when, while class needs may suggest that poems or stories of a certain moral tone may fit into the class thinking especially well at some particular time. Omissions may need to be made even from the basic text, certain selections not fitting into the interests of a special class. Often the pupils themselves should suggest what to read next, using tables of contents as guides, or glancing ahead to see what looks interesting. The teacher whose class reads the next selection because it is printed next in the reader, is sadly neglecting an important problem which it is her duty to solve.

A satisfactory amount of reading material is supplied in most city schools which have high standards. In smaller districts the problem of getting enough reading material is a serious one. Some States furnish traveling libraries, and many schools could be served by these if the teachers would get into touch with them. The Government publications available are described in *Bulletin, 1913, No. 47, Teaching Material in Government Publications*, which may be obtained from the Bureau of Education, Washington, D.C. City libraries frequently establish branch

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libraries in neighboring schools. We are learning to make use of the child's home library where he has one. Parents' associations often help in the purchase of extra books for a school. A Christmas list of books suitable for each child is a welcome suggestion to parents. Newspapers will gladly print such lists. The librarian in one of our larger cities persuaded the authorities in the book departments of large stores to sell only books on an approved list. Marked changes appeared in the books offered for sale. Is there not a suggestion here for teachers?

The language work of the school may contribute to the amount of reading material far more than is generally appreciated. Blackboard stories composed by teacher and pupils may well be copied by older children as writing lessons and preserved for the younger pupils to re-read. Advanced grades may rewrite famous stories in language appropriate for younger pupils. Such papers may be bound in dainty covers and used again and again.

### *Reading lessons developed as language lessons*

Yesterday was Sunday.

Sunday is the first day of the week. Papa does not work on Sunday. We do not come to school. Many

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people go to church and many children to Sunday school.

We like Sunday.

Father and mother can rest and we can play.

(First Grade, St. Louis, Missouri. Columbia School.  
Teacher, Margaret Noonan.)

We went out walking this morning. We were looking for signs of Spring. We saw that the green grass was growing.

We saw something else, too.

Do you know what it was?

We saw a great many little footprints. There was no green grass where the footprints were. The little feet would not let the grass grow. We are going to stay on the walk after this. Then the grass can grow.

(Second Grade, Decatur, Illinois. Oakland School.  
Teacher, Edna L. Harkins.)

### THE CROW AND THE PITCHER

OR

### THE WISE BIRD

*Action.* The crow flies around.

*Crow.* Caw! I am so thirsty.

Where shall I get a drink?

*Action.* The crow looks around for water.

He sees a pitcher.

*Crow.* Oh, there may be water in this.

*Action.* He puts his head into the pitcher.

He tries to reach the water.

He cannot.

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*Crow.* Caw! Caw! I cannot reach it.

*Action.* He tries to tip the pitcher over.

He cannot.

He puts his head to one side.

*Crow.* What shall I do?

*Action.* He sees some small stones.

*Crow.* Caw! Caw! I have an idea.

*Action.* He picks up a stone.

He drops it into the pitcher.

He puts in stone after stone.

The water rises to the top.

The crow drinks the water.

*Crow.* Caw! Caw! I've had a good drink.

*Action.* He walks away.

(Written by Third Grade for Second Grade, Elementary School, University of Chicago. Teacher, Jessie Elizabeth Black.)

Newspapers and magazines, Sunday-school papers and almanacs may have worthy material, while catalogues of various kinds have decided contributions to make.

There should be enough material furnished to meet the needs of various types of children, to give fresh material that will preserve the interest in reading, and to allow pupils to browse around and choose so that they will not feel hampered and limited.

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### *Finding the heart of the story*

Every poem or story has a central theme about which the different parts are organized. Both understanding and appreciation of a literary selection depend upon the finding of this central theme. The conventional reading work of the schools is justly criticized because little is done to make this major purpose clear. Seldom does a lesson in reading concern itself with a large point of view.

At times the title suggests the organizing idea. The teacher may well raise the question why the author has chosen such a title, but the answer can be only tentative until a careful reading determines its fitness. *The Ugly Duckling* is a good example of a significant title. Only when the story has been read can the children see that the ignorance of the barnyard fowls caused suffering; that the duckling was not a duckling after all; that the ugliness which caused so much sorrow was called ugliness because the little swan was compared with little ducks; that mother ducks see beauty only in little ducks. The element of surprise in the story is delightfully guarded in the title. How many children get the idea from the story, however, that an ugly

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duckling turns into a beautiful swan? When the central thought has been appreciated, other selections containing the same thought may be presented. Phœbe Cary's *The Crow's Children* may well follow *The Ugly Duckling*, the mother's attitude being shown there, —

“It takes a mother to be so blind  
She can't tell black from white!”

*The Mountain and the Squirrel* emphasizes the difference in talents and the value of each; while every class will have some favorite quotation which shows the philosophy of individual worth so expressed as to have real meaning to the children.

At times the title may be an excellent one, but so unusual as to mean nothing to a class. *Sifting Boys* is the name of a story in a well-known reader. Discussion of the story showed that no pupil in a certain class had gained any idea of relationship between the title and the story itself. The pupils were able to tell how the manager of a factory selected the more capable boys by their attitude toward shop conditions. Questioning brought out titles which the children considered appropriate. Finally the significance of the author's title was shown them. A few ques-

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tions, asked when the story was first taken, would not only have helped them in understanding the title, but would have added significance to the entire reading of the story. *What have you seen sifted? What does your mother use in sifting flour? What sieve could be used to sift boys? Have you ever been sifted?* Here again the apt quotation will help enforce the central thought: "God had sifted three kingdoms to find the wheat for this planting, then had sifted the wheat, as the living seed of a nation."

A class had read and dramatized *Pilgrim's Progress*. Later they observed the dramatization of *Barclay of Ury* given by another class. One boy remarked casually to his teacher, "This is just the same as *Pilgrim's Progress*. They both show men who gave up everything else for what they thought was right. I guess that's the thing to do." What better test could have been given to show that the organizing idea had been emphasized?

### *Separating a selection into its main sections*

So firm a hold has the sentence method taken upon our teachers that the sentence is made the unit of progress in a majority of our schoolrooms. "Read the next sentence," is the slogan which

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urges on each pupil day after day. A critic of our Sunday schools says that the primary teacher so impresses upon the children the precept, "Always bring a penny," that later offerings never rise above the penny stage. There are times when the next sentence or the next paragraph may be a very suitable assignment, but definite training in finding the larger parts of a story is most necessary and may begin early.

Our primers and first readers are being printed now with this idea of larger units as a basis. The section which tells of the squirrel's experience is separated from that which tells of the rabbit's experience. This makes it easy for the little child to grasp the larger unit of thought as he reads. Where the printing does not suggest this division, the teacher may train herself to have sentences which belong together read together.

A second-grade class was reading the life of a little Eskimo girl. The section dealt with her playthings. "You may read all about one plaything," the teacher directed. Only two children in the group were able to do this without help, but every child was able to pass judgment as to whether the others read far enough or too far. After a few months of such training a class reaches the point where, when a child is called

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upon to read, the teacher will ask, "How far will you read?" "I shall read how the pine tree felt when it was very little," will be the response; or, "I shall read to the place where Hans saw the man trotting along on a horse."

The finding and naming of these important divisions, whether in stories and poems or in informational material, trains the child in getting the larger ideas and their sequence. As he grows older he is able to discuss these larger units intelligently. The heart of the story grows intelligible from their sequence. Viewed in the light of the larger idea he sees the pointedness of allusions, the fitness of wording, and many delicate touches whose significance would otherwise be lost. We may call this process the making and using of outlines, but it is important that it shall not degenerate into formal work of this type.

With older pupils some method of indicating where each large unit begins and ends needs to be employed. The name chosen by the pupil may be written, then the introductory and closing words and punctuation of the section, the bulk omitted being indicated by stars or dashes. The paging should be shown. This method of making definite references is a valuable one for the student to acquire. Malory's account of *How*

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*Arthur Drew the Sword from the Stone*, may be divided in this way: —

Where and why the sword was placed

page — “For a long while ——”

page — “king born of all England.”

First attempt to move the sword

page — “Then the people ——”

page — “that wished to.”

The joust

page — “Upon New Year’s Day ——”

page — “his foster-brother.”

Sir Kay needs a sword

page — “How, as they rode ——”

page — “delivered him the sword.”

Experience will show the amount of this type of work that is of value for a class. Naming divisions of the story indicated by numerals in the printing, renaming parts named by the author, are exercises along this line. At times the author’s paragraphing will not be in accord with the section as named by the pupil, and the section will begin in the midst of a paragraph. This work should help pupils to find the climax of a story, topic sentences, and key sentences. Care will be needed to guard against the idea that these sections must be of uniform length, to emphasize the thought that careful development of plot

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makes possible the expression of important events in few words. The use the class makes of these large units in discussing characters, indicating word pictures, selecting sections for oral reading, and comparing parts, will determine whether the teacher is using this analysis as an aid in teaching or as an end in itself.

### *Stage setting of the story*

The atmosphere of a selection may depend in great degree upon the time and place elements involved. Nature poems frequently make this evident to those who fail in appreciating the importance of time and place in the understanding of other selections. So few words are used to tell when and where the events take place that we fail to see how much of the spirit depends upon these simple factors. Surely *once upon a time* suggests the unusual, as certainly as *one day last summer* speaks of real experience. Expectancy may be aroused with such slight suggestions as a basis.

When pupils, through the enlarging of their experiences, have ideas of varying conditions, of distant places, of time differing widely from our own, the possibilities increase. *What will you expect to find true in the lives of these people? What*

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*will they be thinking and planning about? How will they dress? What quaint words and idioms may they use?* Not the author but the times and places he is portraying determine much that he writes. Homer deals with gods and warriors, Malory with knights and ladies, Irving with ghosts and portly squires, Whittier with sweet and serene family life, — because these go with the times and places of which they write.

As soon as a child is able to do any independent work, surely by the last of the first year, he is able to find the characters in a story. Later he may find what each did, what each said. He may express judgments as to their actions. Throughout the grades work of this type is most important. The more the pupil understands a character, the more truly he enters into his spirit, the better will be his own impersonation in oral reading and dramatizing, and the greater will be the likelihood of the pupil's finding in the character elements of idealism to follow. This impersonal discussion of honesty, loyalty, truth, and obedience is a fine clearing-house for ethical training.

Closely associated with character study is the study of action. Movement always interests children, but there is grave danger that the teacher

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will believe that they care only for rapid action. Many times the teacher will need to read to a class in order that they may see how intense is the action, how rapidly events follow one another. At other times the class may well be required to discover this during study periods. Slow movement may indicate patient waiting for an exciting moment, the influence of conditions which must be overcome slowly, or a dreamy type of incident. "The pod grew and the peas grew. . . . Weeks went by." "It's time to take the window to see Leerie going by." "Either the well was very deep or she fell very slowly, for she had plenty of time as she went down to look about her." The illustration by movement of the action in a story adds to interest and helps to make the meaning clear. Frequently a child who is slow in reading proves very capable in illustrating the movements. "Along he would come, creepy-crawly, creepy-crawly, and put his paw into Brother Rabbit's pantry." "Then he laughed to himself, and hugged himself, and rocked back and forth." "To and fro . . . Strode, with a martial air, Miles Standish, the Puritan Captain."

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### *Parts which grip the reader's attention*

Very early in most stories there is a suggestion that something is going to happen. Gradually this suggestion is reinforced by others. The more keenly interest in the promised change is aroused, the stronger will be the motive which impels the reader to find out what does happen. Many times a word or two hidden in a paragraph of description points the way to the main climax, at another time the clue is given in a passing remark made by a character. Again a key sentence gathers much in a nutshell, requiring careful interpretation if what follows is to be understood. The finding and following out of these clues is excellent training in weighing the values in a selection.

The reaching of the climax in a story is an event indeed, provided teacher and class recognize the force of a climax. *Was this what we thought might happen? When did we feel pretty certain? When were we sure? What other result might have occurred?* There are teachers, however, to whom all parts of a story are of equal value, who have no appreciation of the grip laid on the real reader compelling him to find out what happened. These teachers assign lessons without

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regard to natural divisions in a story, discuss trivialities as frequently as essentials, and have no compunctions at stopping a lesson even at the most thrilling point. These teachers need to learn for themselves the joys of reading, then they will remodel their teaching methods. They may learn much from the mother who never finds bedtime so close that the child may not "finish just this chapter."

### *Some details that count*

Recent editors of literature for children have cut down very wisely the amount of descriptive material presented to them. At times, however, a relatively lengthy description is needed in order to give events their proper setting. Informational material may be mainly descriptive. What are the children thinking as they read these portions? This depends in part upon their recall of their own experiences, in part upon their ability to fuse these recalled experiences into a larger whole. *What do you see when you read this paragraph? What sort of a place is this? What is there here for a child to enjoy?* Such questions as these help a pupil to imagine objects in relationship, to get the spirit of the scene. Often some color, sound, or odor will be mentioned which it will be

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a pleasure to recall in more detail. This filling in of detail is one way of "reading between the lines."

The purpose of the allusion is to emphasize a point by referring to a similar experience which is well known. Too much explanation of unfamiliar allusions loads a reading lesson with an overabundance of detail, but where an allusion is well known it repays richly to dwell upon it for a while. The child who is prowling about "like to an Indian scout," the creature who springs up "like a Jack-in-the-box," are better known through the allusion. Teachers of older pupils need to appreciate more than they do the rich lives which these children have had. "One with Nineveh and Tyre," "Where the Siren sings," "Huge as Goliath of Gath," — there are thousands of such allusions understood by large numbers of our pupils. This again is a use of recall, and it not only strengthens the new idea by associating it with old ones, but also helps the pupil to realize the value of classic literature. These are bits of knowledge common to educated people. One cannot afford to be ignorant of them.

Many details in reading explain themselves. If the total situation is in mind, these details fall naturally into place as the reader sweeps on

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through the selection, adding to the interest, making conditions clear, giving the mind much to think of. There are details, however, whose value is too great for the teacher to trust entirely to this mode of assimilation. Delicate bits of humor, exquisite diction, strong idioms, local color, these may well be subjects for discussion. Frequently they mark the style of an author. "Brave in ribbons, which are cheap and make a goodly show for sixpence," "Snowy summits old in story," "By my faith."

### *Making sure that ideas are understood*

Book knowledge alone is most inadequate for meeting conditions in this practical world. New ideas are obtained through investigation, experiment, exchange of experiences with others, both inside the schoolroom and out. When the new idea is closely related to previous experience, however, reading is one important means of getting the new. Totally new ideas may be much better presented in some other way.

The teacher needs to know the past experiences of her class in order to judge when and how to present new ideas growing from the lesson. At times the best procedure may be to let the new idea challenge the child as he meets it in the

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lesson. Let it suggest that he observe, that he experiment, in order to prove its truth. Suppose a second- or third-grade class is reading of the power of steam as shown in lifting the lid of a teakettle. Some will recall having seen this happen at home, many will be glad to watch at home in preparation for next day's lesson, a few may plan to illustrate the fact in the schoolroom.

Again, interpretation of the lesson may call for a clear understanding of some facts worthy of a lesson by themselves. In planning to teach *The Hare and the Tortoise* to a second-grade class, a successful teacher gave a nature lesson on those creatures and their habits. The children delighted in illustrating the slow, plodding gait of the tortoise and the quick movements of the frisky hare. Not being certain that these children appreciated what a goal stands for, a game was taught later in the day in which the children ran for a goal. These ideas were so essential to the appreciation of the story that they could not be left vague, or even passed with a mere question or two during the reading hour.

Another favorite story tells of the donkey who got rid of his burden of salt by dissolving it in the stream he crossed. The master loaded the donkey with sponges next time, and when the

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donkey tried to lose these in the stream he added to his load. This shows a different possibility in the treatment of ideas which may be new but probably are old. The teacher may well give the children such questions as these to answer either in study time or in class time: *What became of the salt? How do you know? Can you prove it? What happened to the sponges? How can you prove this? How many people know that salt and sponges behave this way when put in water?*

There can be no hard-and-fast rule in such matters, but on the whole we may be sure that in dealing with new ideas the pupil should either recall such old ones as may be needed to show the significance of the new, or the new should be used in ways which will render them full of meaning. A lesson dealing with facts should not degenerate into haphazard dealing with vague ideas. Efforts should be made to clarify the ideas so that the lesson may prove to be of value. Care must be taken not to allow false statements of experience to be given. The teacher who reiterated the question, "How many of you have little red drums?" until every hand went up, was encouraging lying, not desirable thinking. Touch upon one fact, dwell upon another, drive home a third. Thus will children learn their relative

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values, mastering facts instead of becoming their servants.

### *How the child makes the story his own*

Children and teachers are likely to believe, when a story has been read through in sequence, with necessary explanations at specific points, that work with it is finished. This is not so in the adult's reading; why should it be so in the child's? We discuss plots and characters, moral issues and social conditions, style and diction. Some critics are ready to suggest a better working out of the plot, or better plots for illustrating the moral or social issues involved. We follow a sympathetic friend to read him a choice paragraph, a glorious bit of nonsense, a telling quotation. We come back to our favorites again and again.

Some possibilities for this critical judgment are present in the material read by the children. The teacher may arouse lively interest by opening such discussions; children soon learn to participate with good sense and keen enjoyment. The first-grade child who read of the blue brook and declared that all brooks he had seen were brown, was giving a just criticism. The second-grade class which sat speechless when asked, "If the fox had given the stork a pitcher of food, what would

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have been different?" did not know that one is to think about the story that is read. A group of third-grade children dramatized *The Lark's Spurs*, adding to the original story the training of young larks to fly, the facts of which they had learned in a nature lesson. "If there is any part of this story which you like especially, read it to us and tell why you like it." This direction given to a fifth-grade class brought an hour of delightful companionship. A boy fond of dramatizing was broken-hearted, on returning after an absence caused by sickness, to discover that no place had been saved for him in the dramatization of *The Ugly Duckling*. "If you can think of a necessary part which has not been assigned, you may take the part," said the wise teacher. Presently he came back. "I could be the grandfather. I think the children must have gone to the pond to show the swans to somebody, and maybe it was their grandfather visiting them." Needless to say the new character was added.

"Have you thought about Tom since yesterday?" Evidently they had, and the new lesson on *Water Babies* proved that Tom was very much at home in their minds. There is wise suggestion in the old saying, "A penny for your thoughts." Why should we not expect the children to live

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with these characters to whom they are introduced, to dwell upon the charm of the stories, to sing over the music of the poems. These are moving pictures which they may easily summon, as Aladdin summoned the genie.

## II

### PROBLEMS IN EXPRESSION

#### *Oral reading as an art*

RECOGNITION that oral reading differs from silent reading, and that the old humdrum fashion of reading everything orally must be replaced by more intelligent procedures, does not do away with training in oral reading. Rather it suggests that a higher standard in oral reading must be accomplished at a greatly reduced expenditure of time and energy.

Choice of material suited to oral reading is essential for success in this field. There is no time to waste upon poems, paragraphs, or other material the purpose of which is better attained in silent reading periods. Much more definite preparation on the part of the teacher will be necessary, for oral reading is to be lifted to the plane of an art, not left as the daily drudge. Time spent on it must be well spent. Laing well says, "Oral reading has been used largely as a device for ascertaining if the child had mastered the words. Mischievous results have followed the

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abusive use of one process for the purpose of seeing that another process has been performed.”<sup>1</sup> Periods assigned for oral reading should be full of thought, of intensive attempts at its more adequate and artistic portrayal.

### *Helping the child to interpret the spirit*

Absorption in the reading material, saturation with its meaning and its spirit, is the most essential element in oral reading. The more completely a pupil puts himself in the place of the character he is portraying, the more thoroughly he enters into the music or spirit of the poem he is reading, the less self-conscious he will be. The teacher's questions and directions, the class criticisms and suggestions, need to center upon what the character stands for, what he is doing or saying and why, what the poem expresses, the fitness of its wording and rhythm. Little should be said in praise or blame of the pupil, except as to the truthfulness with which he portrays the character, and the spirit which he arouses by his rendering of a poem.

The greater freedom of pupils in all well-conducted classrooms, the constant use of story-telling and dramatization, recent development of

<sup>1</sup> Laing's *Reading: A Manual for Teachers*, p. 59.

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constructive criticism by class and teacher, — all tend toward freeing the pupil from self-consciousness. Increased use of silent reading promises to help in this way also, for many children have been made unhappy by stumbling before their classmates over oral reading unsuited to their ability.

### *Why be certain the child understands?*

The cart has long dragged the horse through the greater part of our oral reading. The pupil has been called upon to read at sight, or with inadequate preparation at his seat, anything and everything presented in the reading course. Expressive reading requires just the opposite procedure. The thought of the whole selection must be in mind, the relation of different scenes and characters to the whole, the shades of meaning expressed in different sentences; climaxes and key sentences must be understood; pronunciation of difficult words mastered; — then oral expression may give to an audience an interpretation which shall be pleasing. No intelligent oral reading can be done otherwise.

During silent reading and study lessons the class may often be encouraged to find parts adapted for oral reading. During the period

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spent in thought mastery, the teacher's promise of adequate time for oral reading later — perhaps with the thought of a special audience — will act as a stimulus to greater effort. The relation of thorough understanding to pleasurable oral reading is comprehended by every child. The burdens imposed upon children so frequently, of reading everything orally, are not of their choosing.

Many teachers fail to recognize a deceitful type of reading which creeps into every school. Its most marked characteristic is fluency; its grave danger is lack of understanding. James says that a reader may read aloud, "with the most delicately modulated expression of intelligence," a book of which he is "incapable of understanding four ideas." Fluency is essential to expressive rendering. Reader and hearer both delight in it. But this type of reader is so fluent that the teacher may take for granted an understanding and appreciation which are not present. If these have been developed by careful work, the rapid rate is desirable. When power and speed are combined, a steady growth in power to interpret will be developed. Left to himself or praised for his fluency, such a reader may reach his maximum of ability in oral reading by the third grade; under careful teaching he should continue to

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grow so long as he has teachers and reading material capable of stimulating him.

Judd explains the stumbling oral reading which is so frequent about the time the fourth grade is reached: The eye has learned a more rapid rate of reading than the vocal muscles. If the eye is held back to the rate of the voice, the pupil loses the rate in eye movement which is of such advantage to him. By using oral reading as suggested here, the voice tends to reach a quicker pace.

Sentences which are statements of fact, many descriptive paragraphs, and most informational material contain little which is emotional in character. Expressive reading of such passages requires that they be so read as to present thought clearly to the listener. Opportunity for emphasis may be present where some ideas are more important than others. The practice of stimulating pupils to read these portions as if portraying emotion is pernicious. Neither should exaggerated emphasis be encouraged except with children whose voices are not flexible. Much labor is expended in this way by some teachers; and the results obtained are not worthy, as they are based upon false notions of expression. Simple and natural expression is all that is needed

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in reading simple statements of fact, clearness of ideas and a sense of values being the main factors influencing the rendition.

*Making the pupil's experiences set standards  
for him*

Stories about people and poems with fine musical rhythm and diction are the best materials for training in oral reading. The pupil's experiences with people and events, his own life struggles, and the oral reading which he has already done are the basis upon which the teacher must work for growth in reading power. The ideals toward which she moves are those presented by our best readers, dramatic actors, and vocal soloists, and by well-taught children of the same age as her own.

The literature which children read deals with many persons and events which they appreciate largely because of their observations. Seeing other persons move in an interesting experience awakens emotion in the child, and suggests his participation in some similar event. When he sees the firemen riding down the street with horses galloping, bells clanging, and people hurrying out of their way, he longs to be a fireman. Again he watches a fisherman patiently casting his line and finally bringing in a fine trout. Now he is all

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eagerness to own a fishpole, and dreams of the fish he will catch. In this manner a great fund of experience is acquired which the teacher may well use. The child is less conscious of his own observations than of the facts observed. To him the important things are that the firemen went by and that the fisherman succeeded. So the teacher's questions and directions may well be: *How did the firemen look? Think how the bell sounded. Make us see the people scatter.*

Far more intense, yet covering a smaller field, are the experiences which make up his own life struggle. Joy when he won the race, disappointment when it rained on circus day, anger at the boy who got the better of the bargain in trading jackknives with him, — these come home to him. The beautiful intimacies of family life and the dignities of church services, too, are influences which arouse and develop in him primitive emotions that may be used in the reading period. Very guarded and discriminating must the teacher be in utilizing this field of emotion. Children are naturally reticent about that which lies nearest them. Here again questions and directions may better be concerned with the character in the story. Yet the teacher must appreciate the child's experience in order to shape her

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questions. *How would the mother speak to Epaminondas?* It would be pretty hard to relate one's own experience in the home after doing a particularly stupid thing, but with what gusto one calls down wrath upon Epaminondas.

Every sentence, every stanza read with delicate interpretation, increases the probability of discrimination in further reading. There is always work to be done in helping children to improve their interpretations, but the teacher who permits children to read without expression day after day, need not expect worthy results until she changes her habits of teaching. Whenever a sentence or a stanza is read, it should represent the most thoughtful interpretation of which the child is capable. Just as a written sentence should usually be written correctly the first time, so a sentence should usually be read correctly and beautifully at the first attempt. In both cases due allowance must be made for exceptional conditions.

### *The need for imitation and repetition*

The child's own interpretation is our chief concern in all this work. No two children will or should use exactly the same intonation, voice shading, or facial expressions in representing Big

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Billy Goat Gruff, Brother Fox, or Ichabod Crane. When a pupil's reading lacks expression, however, many ways may be used to help him improve. Questions regarding the thought, recall of the actions and emotions underlying the conditions, and remembrance of the success with which he has represented other characters, will all help. Repetition with some definite gain in interpretation is time well spent. When he improves on his first rendering, praise should be given.

Repetition takes place naturally in a sequence of lessons which culminates in oral reading. The story as a whole will have been read by the class as a silent reading or study lesson; or the poem may have been read to them by the teacher. Suggestions as to especial parts to be watched in the oral reading may be given in the first discussion. The parts to be discussed may already have been selected by the pupils in the course of previous study. Necessarily much repetition will occur in the discussion. Key sentences, sentences which show action and sound, musical wording, elements of surprise, delight, sorrow, — all these are opportunities for charming work, wherein repetition intensifies the pleasure of reading. Unconscious repetition of the good work of others will be common.

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Children need to hear much good oral reading. The teacher should learn to read well so that she may set standards for them. Good readers from other classes may perform a similar service. A sixth-grade class were to read a fable written in the wording and structure appropriate to their grade. The same fable appeared in simpler form in a first-grade reader, but the emotions and conversation were the same in both. Several of the younger children came to read the story to the older pupils, and their earnest work, given without self-consciousness, stimulated the older pupils to a high degree of effort.

The imitation of sounds heard in natural surroundings is always a delight to children. The range of tone and control of breath gained in such mimicry will do much toward developing flexible, well-modulated voices. The cluck of the hen, the whirr of the automobile, the clang of the fire-alarm bell, the steady tread of passing footsteps, — all lend themselves for this purpose. The pupil will often need to be told to listen again to the sound in real life and to give the class the benefit of the better imitation.

There will be times when both repetition and imitation need to be used so that the pupil is conscious that he is repeating and imitating for

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the sake of better form in his own reading. The use of these factors in less conscious ways may, however, have higher values.

### *Results to be attained*

A flexible voice, trained until habits of modulation have become automatic in ordinary reading, should be the aim. When the thought is understood and the form mastered, the voice naturally falls into a rhythm and melody of expression, largely due to the rhythmic movement of the eyes and the rhythm of breathing. The more essential parts are emphasized according to the ability of the reader, and the result gives pleasure.

Ready recognition of the more important parts and the ability to render them skillfully will come only after much careful teaching has brought these parts into consciousness and given opportunity for their use. To dwell upon the loud and the soft, the swift and the slow, the joyous and the sad, as expressed in specific sentences, brings these elements into the focus of consciousness and assures steady advance in artistic expression.

### III

#### PROBLEMS IN FORM MASTERY

##### THE INFLUENCE OF THOUGHT

###### *Some lessons from experimental psychology*

FORM must be mastered in order that the reading process may proceed with ease. Moreover, this mastery must be so complete that form takes a subordinate place — words being recognized, eye movements made, leaves turned, in a reflex way. The central process of thought getting must be in control. When the influence of this central process in the recognition of words is fully understood and utilized in the teaching process, economy of time and effort are secured.

Twice as many words can be seen when given in their connection. This refers to the physical act of seeing — the sweep of the eye is reinforced by the thought which is in the mind. This needs to affect our practice in the selection of reading material. It rules out that which is too difficult, for pupils will not see connections if the work is too difficult. Then, too, it confirms the practice of making certain that the pupil has the thought

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partially in mind when he attacks his reading lesson.

The general arrangement of letters in a word is seen by the eye, but the word itself is determined and the final form is made clear by the sense, the meaning of the word in its connection. Suppose that the pupil meets the word *think* in its context. He may see first the general word form or the dominating letters *th* and *k*. These arouse certain associations, possibly of sound. The word *think* comes into consciousness partly as the result of these associations, partly because its meaning fits the context. Then the less important letters are seen and the details become clear. Meaning and form combine to determine the word. This explains why reading methods which deal with words and expressions familiar to children accomplish results with far less effort and strain. A child will read with ease a story written in natural diction. If he comes upon an unchild-like expression, he stumbles over the very words which he read fluently in a preceding sentence. In his reading tests Thorndike found the word *who* especially difficult. He accounts for this by its not being in use by the average person. The influence of meaning also explains why words in lists are more difficult to recognize than words in

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sentences and paragraphs, and suggests why an abundance of supplementary reading is better than too much word drill. The development of the thought in the reading lesson is essential in order that the thought itself may be interpreted, but it is of value also because of the direct influence of thought on the mastery of form.

### *The sentence as the unit of thought*

The central thought of a selection influences every sentence, yet the sentence may be considered the ordinary unit of thought. Huey, quoting James, says, "Cut a thought in cross-section at any moment of its utterance, and 'you will find, not the bald word in process of utterance, but that word suffused with the whole idea.' " <sup>1</sup> We speak in sentences, and the motor habits thus acquired influence our habits of reading. Again we quote Huey, "The sentence is *not* naturally composed of words which originally existed independently"; rather it is begun "with a total meaning and a total intention of expressing this meaning."

This tendency to think in sentences influences our power to see larger units as we read, the flow of consciousness affects the recognition of words.

<sup>1</sup> Huey, *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading*, p. 133.

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Cattell discovered that we read in word wholes and again in phrase or sentence wholes. In rapid reading the eye seems to notice only the most essential words and word groups, the unessentials falling into place in consciousness, but not being separately seen by the eye. "Indeed, hundreds of phrases and sentences have occurred so often in our speech that they have a place in mind as specific memory-wholes; and as slight a glimpse is needed to start the recognition of these as when the tap of a cane suffices to announce the approach of our grandfather."<sup>1</sup> From this it naturally follows that "the reader's acquirement of ease and power in reading comes through increasing ability to read *in larger units*."<sup>2</sup> This attention to larger units needs training. The widening of the field of attention is a matter of practice. Teachers must discover and help pupils to discover those phrase and sentence wholes which are most likely to occur frequently. The earlier in the reading life these are mastered, the greater the economy of time and effort.

Expectancy is a factor in this forward sweep of consciousness. "If we read *no more*, we expect presently to come upon a *than*; if we read *however* at the outset of a sentence, it is a *yet*, a *still*,

<sup>1</sup> Huey, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> Huey, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

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or a *nevertheless* that we expect.”<sup>1</sup> In studying how the character of the text influences rate in reading it was found that “prepositional phrases, substantives with a series of modifying adjectives or with a closely linked phrase modifier, and series of any kind which had a rhythmic swing were preferred.”<sup>2</sup> Pupils may be trained to attend to those words which awaken expectancy and to those word series which are more readily grasped. The teacher needs to select for more intensive work those elements which have been found to make the strongest appeal to the mind and to the eye. So speed will be acquired along with greater understanding.

### *Elements in thought as a basis for form training*

Every story has in it time, place, and action elements; every plot has its sentences which look forward and back, key sentences and climaxes; every character is portrayed by description, by deeds, by conversation. Choice wording, local color, apt expressions may be noted in any author's style. Teachers will think of other valuable elements not mentioned here. What is important is that we shall get our eyes opened to

<sup>1</sup> James, quoted by Huey, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> Huey, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

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the worth of emphasizing these larger thought wholes. They may be used in lesson assignments, in discussions, in drills. The teacher may give an expression telling the time of the incident, asking pupils to read what happened then. She may ask for expressions of time, requiring children to point to them and name them. One group may be held responsible for the times, another for the places, another for the events in a story. The lists given below show how many words cluster about these ideas of time, place, etc. Primary teachers will note how the short, unmeaning words slip into place. *When, what, where, who*, will appear again and again in making assignments.

### *Time*

#### *Indefinite*

once upon a time  
one day  
by and by  
once  
then  
long, long ago

#### *Definite*

when the bread was made  
to-day  
at five o'clock

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a minute later  
in spring  
when they had gone a long way  
now

### *Place*

in the king's house  
through the street  
near a garden  
high up in the sky  
down to the field

### *Action*

go to school  
hunt for eggs  
ran as fast as they could  
it rolled and it rolled and it rolled

### *Question and answer*

{ What time shall we go?  
{ Let us go at three o'clock.  
{ Where have you been?  
{ I 've been to London.  
{ Why do you cry, little fox?  
{ I cry because the squirrel cries.

### *Key sentences*

They will run into my den, and I will tell the  
king.  
But Topknot would do as she pleased.  
All at once her fairy godmother appeared.

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So Tom, for the first time in his life, found out that he was dirty.

Old Time is a liar! We're twenty to-night!

*Sentences which refer backward and forward*

"If your spurs are not to fight with," continued the fairy, "I should like to know what they are for!"

The tortoise was about to say, "How high we are!" when he remembered that he must not open his mouth.

"What are you doing there, goody?" asked the princess; for she had never seen a distaff or a spindle.

*Suspense*

Tramp! Tramp! somebody was coming upstairs. Who could it be?

It is about a — I'm not going to tell you yet.

*Climax*

In the clear water beneath him he saw another swan more beautiful than the others.

The princess came to her window to see what was the matter and — burst out laughing!

First a shiver, and then a thrill,

Then something decidedly like a spill —

And the parson was sitting upon a rock.

*Emotion and character portrayal*

How angry he felt!

Sindbad did not want diamonds. He wanted to go home.

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"You have tried to make me break my word to my master."

"Write me as one who loves his fellow-men."

### *Humor*

"See, she has a red rag around her leg. That is a great honor."

"Oh, my ears and whiskers, how late it's getting!"

"How funny it will seem, sending presents to my feet!"

A noise as of ten thousand tin kettles tied to ten thousand dogs' tails!

Topic sentences, polite expressions, cause and effect relations, lists of opposites, names of persons spoken to, sound and color ideas, references to nature, — these are some other elements which may be utilized. Care needs to be exercised that this work does not degenerate into formal hunting for certain expressions. In no one lesson will much of this work be profitable. Each lesson has its possibilities, however, and the work does not need to become stereotyped.

### ATTENTION TO FORM ITSELF

#### *Some lessons from experimental psychology*

The final test of word mastery is the ability of the reader to recognize the word in a reflex way

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during the reading process, so that its meaning will fit readily into the thought process. However, before words are grasped reflexly they must be presented to the eye many times. Experimental work in word recognition has been performed with adults. We need to have such experiments carried on with children. We are relatively safe, however, in believing that a child perceives a word in much the same way as an adult.

All work with sight words is based upon our knowledge that a word whole may be recognized by the eye. A long step forward was taken when it was discovered that variation in length makes word recognition easier. How much effort had been wasted because schoolmen believed that greater length makes a word more difficult! Yet Cattell found that it took only one thousandth of a second longer to read long words than to read short ones.

Erdmann and Dodge found length and the character of the general form of a word the main factors in its recognition. The general form of a word is determined by the letters of which it is composed. The first half of a word is more important than the last, the upper half of a word or letter is more important than the lower, letters which extend above and below the line seem to

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aid in recognition. "The dominating letters and syllables in words and the dominating words in the sentence give individual character to the whole. The eye seizes on that in the given whole which gives it a distinctive character."<sup>1</sup> Since these dominating parts of the word influence the mastery of words, we need to develop our practice by taking advantage of this fact. Economy in word mastery may come by discovering which words may be taught most readily by emphasizing their dominant parts, and by developing methods of making this emphasis.

The familiar elements in a word aid in getting the whole. This is where need for analysis arises. All work with phonics, phonograms, spelling, and syllabication must find justification here. These need to be recognized as contributing elements, however, not as ends in themselves. There is abundant evidence that no one method of analysis is a universal short cut to word mastery. New methods of analysis may yet be developed and a new sense of values may be discovered in those now in use. It is very possible that one phonogram or one syllable may have one hundred or one thousand times the value of another, and may be learned in a correspondingly

<sup>1</sup> Laing, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

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shorter time. The larger the known unit recognized in a new word, the greater the economy. It is better to see *nurse ry* than *nur ser y*.

The danger of dependence upon a phonic or an alphabet method, or upon a method based upon repetition of words and phrases, is that they emphasize but one phase in a complex process, and teachers who use them tend to neglect other phases which are as important or more important. Not only does the sound of an isolated letter differ from that sound as given in context, but the movements made to produce it are different. We are told that children learn to associate sounds with words, whether they are taught by a phonic method or not. Not all children taught by such a method use it in determining unknown words. To recognize a word by a combination of the context association with the sound of the initial consonant is more economical than to sound the entire word.

### *Word and phrase drills*

Perhaps the word "tests" might be more truly descriptive than the word "drills" for the process indicated here. A new word or phrase may be most economically presented to the pupil in an attractive and natural context. The best

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way to provide for repetition is to call for it in a new and interesting context. A time comes, however, for testing ability to recognize the new word. Then the word may be presented in its most difficult form, that is, in a list of words.

Select with care the words and phrases for drills. They may be chosen upon the thought basis or upon the form basis. They may grow out of class needs in enunciation or in recognition. It is probably uneconomical to drill upon words unrelated to one of these two needs, though occasionally this may be necessary. The practice of listing the hard words of a given lesson for drill may be wasteful because the words selected by the teacher are not difficult for the pupil, or because they are relatively unimportant, or because there is no relationship between the words thus selected.

At the outset one needs to determine the different ways in which pupils may be helped to perceive each word. Where lists are prepared on the thought basis, thought relationships will be helpful, though use may well be made of phonics and syllabication. Words which are opposites may well be taught together: *yes, no; day, night; black, white*. Lists built upon common phonic elements, prefixes, suffixes, etc., should generally

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have the most emphasis upon these common elements.

We are concerned with giving pupils mastery over large numbers of words, and in teaching them how to work out new words. Many teachers claim that it is more economical to tell new words as they are needed, others are most emphatic in requiring independent work by the pupils. May it not be that there is a tendency to overlook the fact that our pupils are presented with a very large reading vocabulary to master in a short time, that they need to hear these words pronounced much more than is frequently done, although they do need training in methods of attack. The author believes that exercises may well be given in the fourth and fifth grades in which words in lists will be rapidly but correctly pronounced by the teacher and repeated by the pupils, at times individually and again in concert. This ear appeal must always be given in the case of words likely to be mispronounced.

The essentials of drill are (1) focalization upon the work, (2) repetition with attention, (3) permitting no exceptions. Drills need to be short, varied, definite, rapid. From three to five minutes gives time to drill upon from twenty to fifty

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words or phonic elements. A half-second exposure is sufficient with known words; beware of slow work. Some words will prove more difficult than others and should be presented more frequently. Easy words should be mixed in with those presenting greater difficulty. Wrong answers should be immediately corrected by the class. The following types of drill may be modified for use in higher primary grades.

### *Types of word and phrase drills*

1. Words or phonic elements (from 6 to 20) written clearly on the blackboard, each new word or sound appearing several times; class grouped near the blackboard.

Teacher points; pupils name or sound in turn; at close class name or sound in concert.

Teacher points; calls on pupils not in turn; at close one or two children name all words in list.

Teacher calls for word; child points; each child has a turn.

Child points; calls on one pupil for three words in succession; if all are right, successful child takes his turn pointing and calling.

Child sent out of room; class select a word; pupil returns and tries to guess word chosen, pointing to each word and naming it; when he succeeds, another child is sent out.

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Child points; names three words which he knows; each child has a turn.

2. Words or phonic elements listed in book or printed in context.

Every child points, teacher moves about rapidly to see that each finds words, helping those who have difficulty.

Teacher names word or phonic element; children find and name.

In naming phonic element give both element and keyword, having children point to both; e.g., *ing, sing*.

This same type of drill may be given with the words on any page, a review page or a new one. Children are helped by knowing that words already mastered will be useful in new work.

Child names word or phonic element; others find and name.

Children point to words in order as listed, naming in turn.

Where words are given in pairs, have the child give both words.

3. Words or phonic elements printed on cards.

Teacher shows cards rapidly; pupils name or sound in turn; at close class name or sound in concert.

Teacher shows cards; calls on pupils not in turn; at close one or two children name all the words or sounds.

## PROBLEMS IN FORM MASTERY

Cards on blackboard ledge; teacher calls for word; child finds word card; each child has a turn.

Cards on blackboard ledge; words written on board; child selects and names word card which he knows, matches it with same word on blackboard.

Cards distributed among children; teacher or child calls for word; child brings card containing word.

4. To emphasize dominant letters and syllables.

Teacher writes list of well-known words on blackboard, erases lower half of each word.

Pupils try to name words.

Teacher prints dominant letters or syllables of well-known words listed in back of book, indicating omitted letters; children find words in list, point and name; e.g., *k-tt--s*, *pl-y*.

Teacher holds word cards so that only upper half of word is shown, children name words.

5. To emphasize word groups.

Teacher arranges a word group with cards: e.g., *in the tree*; changes the final word, *in the song*, *in the morning*; changes the initial word, the middle word, etc.

Teacher writes word groups on blackboard; erases lower half of words; children name word groups or find them in primer.

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

### *Speed drills*

The development of a rapid rate in reading is a new problem for the schools. The eye moves across the page in a series of sweeps, fixations occurring between the sweeps. During fixations the eye sees the words. Dearborn determined that on an average from five to eight fixations are made per line, the fastest readers reading more than three times as fast as the slowest. Huey found rate increased by decreasing the number and duration of the reading pauses. Moreover, the rapid readers remember more and show a higher type of thinking in reproducing what is read. Edison relates his own experience in increasing his reading rate and urges the schools to train for rapid reading. Huey says, "Personally I should be grateful if I had been given speed drills in reading for thought in my public school days." There is danger of one's becoming habituated to a slow rate when a rapid rate is not acquired early. A second-grade child naively told me she believed she could read as fast as I, "because I'm the fastest reader in this class." An eleven-year-old girl tested by Huey had a faster rate than most university men tested. Rapid readers tend to use phrase and sentence wholes, slow readers

## PROBLEMS IN FORM MASTERY

read word by word. Silent reading is a simpler process than oral reading, and much greater speed may be reached in it.

Specific tests to arouse a desire to read rapidly and to train in methods of gaining speed may well be given. In general, for these tests, it may be better to use relatively simple material, to borrow supplementary readers from lower grades. When testing for speed pay no attention to expression or to inaccuracies which do not affect the thought. Each pupil may well keep a record of his own score and make a graph showing his progress.

### *Types of speed drills*

All pupils open books at given page; are told where to begin to read. Close books but keep places with finger. Told to open at signal "Start"; to close at signal "Stop." Teacher or pupil gives signals, allowing one minute for reading. Test how far each read in the time allowed. How many read one page? two pages? Question as to main thought.

Pupils are asked to read a given amount, each standing when through. Teacher writes on board at the end of 15 seconds, "15 sec."; at end of 30 seconds, "30 sec."; and so on. Each child notes the number of seconds written first after he stands.

Pupils find given page, hold book closed, open upon signal, look for well-known sentences or word groups,

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

close books on signal and report. Only a few seconds should be allowed for finding these sentences.

Pupils find given page, look for names of persons, of objects, expressions showing time.

Books on desks closed; teacher or pupil reads to part of story where suspense is aroused; class finish story silently, keeping time in seconds as above.

Mastery of form is a continuous process. Throughout life new forms will be learned, old forms will tend to become better fixed. The child who has been trained to reasonable self-helpfulness, who has learned to conquer new words through either context relation or analysis of form, and who has a reading rate worthy of his ability, has reason to thank the teachers who have made this possible.

### *The hygiene of type and page*

There has been notable improvement in the hygienic make-up of readers for use in early grades. The teacher needs to know whether the books she is using measure up to the best standards. In higher grades there is still need for improvement in the majority of books used. Investigation is being made of the size of type best fitted for charts and drill cards, of the distance at which pupils can best see charts and cards.

## PROBLEMS IN FORM MASTERY

Eyestrain will be less common when scientific standards have been developed and adopted.

The standards given by Shaw are as follows: —

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Size of type</i>	<i>Width of leading</i>
1	2.6 mm.	4.5 mm.
2, 3	2	4
4	1.8	3.6

One inch equals 25.4 millimeters. Rulers may be obtained which measure inches on one edge and millimeters on the other. The height of a one-space letter measures the size of type. Width of leading is measured from the base line of one line of type to the top of a one-space letter in the next succeeding line; i.e., from the base of an *i* in one line to the top of an *n* in the next line.

Type should be clear and sufficiently black. Standards are not yet developed. Printing from another page should not show through. Paper should be without gloss. The inner margin of the page should be wide enough so that when the book is open troublesome shadows are not seen and words are not distorted by the curve of the inner part of the page. The binding should be flexible.

In primer work, when sentences longer than one line are first used, the division should be

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

made so that the natural word groups remain unbroken: —

It said, “Tick-tock, tick-tock!”  
                    night and day.

not: —

It said, “Tick-tock, tick-tock!” night  
and day.

Word lists, alphabets, script forms, and other extraneous matter might better be on separate pages. They tend to distract the eye from the continuous forward sweep essential for reading. Pictures may be so scattered on a page that they also tend to interfere with the eye sweep. They should be placed at the top or bottom of the page or on separate pages.

## IV

### SOME SPECIAL METHODS IN THE TEACHING OF READING

#### *The basic text and its use*

THE best basic text is one which presents rich content, varied style, and wholesome repetition of a natural vocabulary — all graded to suit the interests and abilities of a given class. With such a text strong work may be done in thought interpretation, in expressive oral reading, and in drill leading to independence. Pupils may return again and again to certain selections or paragraphs to compare events and characters with those in other sections, to express actions or emotions portrayed in specific sentences, to discover the frequency with which a common word or idiom has been used. The basic text should be a mine of delight; the more it is used by class and teacher, the deeper should be their interest in its poems and stories.

A more intensive type of work is to be done with the basic reader than with supplementary material, a higher degree of finish should be

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

reached with the oral reading which it presents. The pictures in its descriptions, the music in its poems, the characters in its stories should enter into the lives of the pupils, helping them not only in their interpretation of new reading material, but also in reading the scenes of the life drama of which they are a part. All that deadens must be kept away from a reading lesson in the basic text, all that vitalizes must be brought to help in its interpretation.

### *Four problems in beginning reading*

The problems of the teachers of beginning reading are in part identical with those of all teachers. The more these teachers realize that those in other grades share their problems, the greater will be their professional comradeship; one may get help and give help on all sides, for growth is assured in this way. A clear understanding of the special problems met by the child in his early reading is essential, however; only by knowing these is it possible to provide for their mastery.

The mystery of connecting thought with symbol has been partly solved for most children by the time they enter school. They know that older children and grown people enjoy looking at the queer black marks in books and newspapers.

## SOME SPECIAL METHODS

Rhymes and stories have been read to them from their own picture books, and they may be able to find the page on which some favorite appears, perhaps looking at the page itself and reciting the rhyme in imitation of the grown-ups.

Four great problems confront them:—

- a.* Learning the printed words which are symbols of spoken words.
- b.* Getting control of the nerves and muscles which govern the smaller eye movements.
- c.* Analyzing words to find elements with which to discover new words.
- d.* Learning to respond to the thought presented by the printed page.

All early reading is a combination of reading by the teacher and by the pupil, for whenever a teacher tells a word she is really reading. The words read may be divided into three classes:—

- (1) The words which the teacher tells or suggests, a large number at first, gradually growing less.
- (2) The words which the pupils attempt to name because of the context, but of which they are not sure — a much more valuable source of mastery than is generally recognized. Each attempt must be confirmed or corrected immediately, but the pupils should be encouraged to make these attempts.
- (3) The words which the pupils know — gradually

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

growing in number. Pupils need much praise for mastering words.

There are three special eye movements in which children need training: —

- (1) The movement from left to right in reading words and in reading lines. Careful pointing from left to right aids here greatly. This movement is established in a few weeks.
- (2) The movement from the right end of one line to the left end of the next line. By using a plain strip of paper, four inches by one inch, the child may cover the lines below the one which he is reading. When he finishes reading one line, the moving of the marker exposes the next and confusion is avoided. This movement is established by the end of the first half year.
- (3) The grasping of two or more words in a single eye movement. This helps to establish a rapid rate of reading. It is helped by work with phrases or word groups.

The analysis of words into their elements is a great help in mastering new words, but it should not be depended upon too much during the first half-year. During the second and third years it should become an effective tool. Phonic work should be used for its values in voice training and ear training as well as for word analysis.

## SOME SPECIAL METHODS

- (1) *Rhyming words.* Use the rhyming words given in the rhymes to call attention to the likeness of the sounds. Repeat *tree, me; you, mew; fly, by, rock-a-bye*, dwelling on the sounds. Have the children repeat these. Let them give other words which rhyme. Instead of telling a new word in the lesson, say sometimes, *It rhymes with —*. The children know *nod*; ask, *Who can find a word in the lesson which rhymes with nod?* The pleasure in the sound value interests the children in learning the words.
- (2) *Imitative words.* Use the words which imitate sound or action — *mew, twinkle, moo, rock-a-bye, peek-a-boo* — to arouse interest in making sounds. Children enjoy repeating these sounds over and over. *Babble-bubble* is a word in which they delight, it gives much practice on *b*, yet this sound is difficult to give by itself. Work for different ways of playing with these sounds — loud, soft, near, far away, in different tones of voice. This will lead to better voice control as well as train the ear to sound values.
- (3) *Phonograms and consonant sounds.* These are selected from the words which the children are using frequently in their reading. The essentials are for a child to hear the sound clearly, to repeat the sound distinctly, to associate the sound with the written symbol, to use the knowledge thus gained in attacking new words.

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Work for clear sweet sounds; *b* should be mel-low; *s*, sibilant; *m*, *n*, *p*, and *t*, delicate. Watch the placing of the tongue, the use of lips and teeth; many defects of articulation come because children do not use these organs properly.

The teacher may begin the reading work by using the primer from the first, supplementing this by blackboard lessons; she may prefer to spend some weeks in blackboard work without the primer. There is a false notion in the minds of many primary teachers that to tell a child a word is all right in blackboard work, all wrong in primer work. There is really no difference; at first he must be told, in no other way can he learn. As he gains power to discover new words through context or phonic analysis, fewer words will be told him. The effectiveness of blackboard work lies in its flexibility, the variety of experience which may be turned into reading lessons, the ease with which new sentences may be written, and the frequency with which needed words may be written many times. The permanence of the material printed in the primer is its valuable quality; to-day, to-morrow, next week, the words appear in the same place, stories with their appropriate pictures, sentences in the accustomed context.

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Early reading lessons must be short. The children must be working with thought material in simple form. Much of the reading should be silent, the child interpreting the thought by action, movement, drawing. Drills on words should be at separate periods. Slowly a reading vocabulary is built up. The teacher should plan to use this vocabulary in varied lessons. Fortunately the supplementary primers use largely the same vocabulary of fundamental words, though their stories differ. This makes it possible to turn now to this primer, now to that, for an additional lesson, thus adding interest and getting the much-needed repetition.

Incidental reading makes use of the words which pupils see frequently: street names and signs; names of street cars seen daily; names of public buildings, post-office, bank, library, church; names of seeds, of farming implements, the children's own names and those of their parents. Directions may be given by writing them on the blackboard: *Run to your seats. Take your letter cards. Make these words.*

The experiences of the children may be made the basis of a lesson related to the regular lesson but giving a different viewpoint. A Monday lesson might well grow out of a simple talk as to

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

what the mothers are doing. Such sentences as this will be developed: —

This is Monday.  
See mother wash.  
See her wash the clothes.  
Splash, splash, splash!

Even in such simple work there needs to be a central thought, no matter how briefly expressed. There must be natural sequence in the sentences and a variety of expression to call for natural voice control. Keep the sentences childlike in diction.

Whenever possible, have older pupils copy these lessons, then bind them into booklet form with the children's own illustrations. Each child then has his own book which he has made, and the lessons can be re-read many times.

Encourage children to bring picture books from home to read to the class. Make use of supplementary school readers from the first.

### *Description of an early book lesson*

The presentation of a reading lesson is a very complex process. Thoughtful experience may enable the teacher to make such a lesson a high type of artistic work. No two people will give

## SOME SPECIAL METHODS

any lesson in exactly the same way, although many basic elements will be used by all teachers. Every teacher needs to vary her procedure from day to day. Many ways of making such variations are suggested in this text. A certain basic procedure from which variations occur tends to become habitual with each teacher. This is the product of her experience and should illustrate her best endeavors. If it is based upon correct principles, she need find no cause for alarm in the fact that it differs from the work of a colleague. To help the experienced teacher in challenging her own practice, to show the inexperienced teacher the complexity of an ordinary lesson, the following description is given.

The pupils are assumed to have reached a stage in which certain attitudes and habits have been initiated. They follow the central thought. They associate the thought in a sentence with the character speaking. They know a few words and phonic elements. They can work out sentences with the teacher's help. They can keep the place with the aid of markers and forefingers. The stronger pupils are able to read the page in sentence groups after the individual sentences have been read. They are likely to suggest dramatizing this page.

# READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

## *Lesson procedure*<sup>1</sup>

### *The teacher's part*

#### I

To relate the picture to the thought and text of the lesson.

What has Betty met this morning?

Find the word *bird* in our lesson. (If the children have trouble in finding it, tell them to look at the end of the first line.) Name it. Find it again. Name it. (Be certain that every child finds and points to the word.)

What has the bird in the tree?

Find the words *a nest* in the lesson.

What are in the nest?

Find the words *three eggs*.

Play that you hear the bird speak. What does he say? (If they do not give "*Tweet, tweet!*" the teacher may give it.) Find the bird's words in our lesson.

*Note.* This part of the lesson should move rapidly. Encourage children's remarks about the situation, but push definitely through the work.

#### II

To help the children to read the sentences.

Place your markers below the title of the lesson. The name of

### *The child's part*

#### I

To enjoy the picture. To point to words and word groups named by the teacher.

A bird.

Children find, point, name.

Children find, point, name.

A nest.

Children find, point, name.

Three eggs.

Children find, point, name.

Imitate bird sounds which they have heard.

Children find, point, name.

#### II

To read about Betty and the bird.

Children place markers.

<sup>1</sup> Based upon page 42 in *The Riverside Primer*. Copyrighted, 1911, by Houghton Mifflin Company. A reproduction of this page of the Primer is here inserted.



## HOW DO YOU DO, PRETTY BIRD?

“How do you do, pretty bird?”

“I am very well, thank you.

I am very busy.

I have a nest.

There are three eggs in it.

Soon you will see three little birds.

Tweet, tweet!”





## SOME SPECIAL METHODS

the lesson tells what Betty said to the *pretty bird*. What do you suppose Betty said when she met the *pretty bird*? What do you say when you meet any one? (The children may give some other forms of salutation. Accept these, and give them a cue.) Betty began by saying *how*. What did she say to the *pretty bird*?

Move your markers.

The first word in this sentence is *how*. Betty is speaking to the *pretty bird*. What does she say? It is just like our title, is n't it? Point to *how*, to *how do you do*, to *bird*. (If the books lie on a table or on the children's desks, they may use both forefingers in pointing to the word group, indicating the first and last words. If one forefinger only is used, be sure that it points to the entire group.) Read what Betty says.

Move your markers.

How do you answer when some one says *How do you do*? (If the children say "pretty" *well*, substitute *very* without comment.)

Let us find out how the bird answered Betty. (*I am* and *you* are words they should know. If they trouble any one, call on a strong pupil to tell. Tell any of the other words needed.)

Move your markers.

Think how hard this bird has been working. I believe you can think what he tells Betty. (If *very* troubles the children, have

Children give salutations.

Several children read title.

Whenever this direction is given, children move markers to expose next line. Some will not wait to be told, a good sign.

One or two children read the sentence.

Children find, point, name.

One child reads the sentence.

Children give responses.

Strong pupils tell words.

Two or three pupils read the sentence.

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

them find it in the preceding sentence. Try to have them get *busy* by thinking of the work the bird has to do, then if necessary sound it slowly for them.) What other word on this page begins with this sound — *b*?

Busy.

Bird.

(Work with the other sentences in the same way. Except *tweet* all other words are reasonably familiar. If any gives trouble, let a strong pupil tell it or tell it yourself. Do not let this work drag.)

### III

To have page read as a unit.

Could we play this? How?

Who will be the bird?

(Choose a pupil of medium ability.)

Who will be Betty?

(Choose a very strong pupil.)

*Note.* — Try to have some impersonation noticeable, though the reading alone is a serious problem at this stage.

### III

To play Betty and the bird.

A pupil gives directions.

The two pupils read the parts.

Association of the thought with those words which are full of meaning is the first step in learning such words and word groups. This is illustrated by *bird*, *a nest*, *three eggs*, *how do you do*, although only the last group is new. Association of the sound with the word is illustrated by *tweet*. A second step is the comparison of like word forms, as in comparing the first sentence with the title,

## SOME SPECIAL METHODS

the second *very* with the first. A third step is the recognition of known words. This is utilized in each line read. Each pupil whispers those he knows as he works in preparing the sentence. Strong pupils tell known words which give others difficulty.

Control of eye movements is helped as the significant words are found in part I. The teacher's directions need to be specific here — at or near, beginning of line, end of line, top of page, middle of page, bottom of page. The use of the markers and of pointing as in part II is another help. The final reading in part III is fine training in control of the eyes. Accuracy, then speed, should be developed as these habits are formed.

Analysis of words is touched upon by the work with the sound *b*. Response to thought comes in the conversation concerning the lesson and in the dramatization. Yet in working out these various problems, a unified lesson is the product.

### *Classification of lesson types*

The reading material supplied to our pupils varies in style and in purpose. The teacher needs to recognize this variety and adapt her teaching to the style and purpose of each selection. While

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

this is done by the better trained teachers throughout the country, it is not at all unusual to find a nonsense poem being read without any realization that there is fun in it, a descriptive selection used for drill in oral reading, and other types used without any regard for values.

Not only do the author's style and purpose need to guide the teacher in determining her lesson plans, but also the needs of the class for lessons of such types as give them power in different lines. On the one hand the teacher needs to ask herself: Is this a nonsense poem or a lyric; an informational selection or a story; an appreciation of nature or a tale showing some racial virtue? On the other hand, she questions: Does this class need training in rapid silent reading; in emotional response; in better habits of study? Only as she recognized both of these phases in her lesson planning, will she help her pupils in solving their reading problems. There should be steady growth in every reading class along all these lines. To some there is a suggestion of heresy in the statement that pupils may get the message of a selection through silent reading; others doubt the need of drill lessons, while some timid souls fear they will be charged with waste of time if they give appreciation lessons.

## SOME SPECIAL METHODS

A classification based upon the character of the reading material will give: —

The poem of nature.

The poem of child life.

The poem of fun.

The short story.

The informational selection.

The drama.

The long story.

A classification based upon types of work to be accomplished contains: —

The study recitation.

The silent reading lesson.

The appreciation lesson.

The dramatic reading.

The dramatization.

The drill, including the sight reading lesson.

The presentation of individual and group readings.

### *Types based upon character of material*

#### *The poem of nature*

Recall the nature experience upon which the poem is based. A similar experience may have to be accepted. The poem gives a new thought, a different interpretation of these nature ideas.

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

The message of the swallow, the mystery of the wind, the moon floating in the sea of sunset, — these are the treasures the poet shows us.

The music of each poem also needs to be brought out. Many times the teacher needs to read the poem to the children first. Notice the rhyming words, the repetition of words and word-groups, the use of alliteration. Always read a poem so that the rhythm is evident — not in a singsong way, but fitting the words and thought to the rhythm as you would to music.

### *The poem of child life*

These are like the nature poems except that the basic experience is found in the child's relationship with people, in his own activities. Human nature is more valuable to the child than the nature world, essential as that is. Thinking about such an experience in a beautiful way makes it poetic. Never let word difficulties crowd out the beauty.

### *The poem of fun*

The children must see the fun, that is the main thing. It may be a whimsical situation, an absurd event, a play upon words. Train children to recognize nonsense, not to laugh simply because some one else laughs.

## SOME SPECIAL METHODS

### *The short story*

The charm of the short story is its simplicity, its rapid movement, the ease with which the point is reached. The danger is that the teacher will consider the point as so obvious that she will not test the children to see if they understand it.

### *The informational selection*

The use of the informational selection may lead to observation of things not previously seen, it may verify previous observations, or it may open the way for discussion of persons and conditions. Seldom will it prove appropriate for oral reading, except as a sentence or paragraph is read to make a point. Lessons from newspapers and magazines fall largely under this type. Essential parts, clearness of wording, relation to the life of the pupils, — these suggest the character of the discussions. Give opportunity to report on observations and experiments which are the outgrowth of such lessons. Encourage children to bring these topics up for discussion at home and call for reports of such discussions. Train for the open-minded attitude, for gracious recognition of a verification which shows one's error. "You see I was mistaken," may show a moral victory. There may be differences of opinion, not of fact.

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

### *The drama*

Conciseness and directness characterize the dramatization printed in true dramatic form. This is a fine test of the mastery which pupils have acquired over the essentials of time, place, characters, plot. The brevity of the directions may tempt the teacher to give too much explanation, the possibilities of dramatic movement and character portrayal may lead her to substitute her interpretation for that of the children. The children's own work is what counts most.

### *The long story*

The wise division of this type of story into its main parts, with careful study of the essentials in each part, will help the children to get the large values from each story, as well as help them toward establishing good study habits.

Discussion should center upon the characters, how they look, what they do, what they say, what characteristics they show; the main events, who take part in them, why, what results occur; the time of each event, the place. Find the sentences which are most important, key sentences upon whose interpretation the understanding of the story depends. In this way the ideas of the story become clear, the vocabulary is used natu-

## SOME SPECIAL METHODS

rally, new words appear in their context, the foundation is laid for intelligent and therefore expressive oral reading.

In this discussion have the pupil read from the text the word, the word group, or the sentence from which he gained his point. Accept no desultory statements; be sure that the pupil follows the thought that he is reading to a definite end.

Dramatization is a natural outgrowth of most of these stories, but it comes at the close of study rather than, as in the preceding type, at the beginning.

"The long story or poem, peddled out in small instalments, is an artistic and pedagogical absurdity."

### *Types based upon character of work*

#### *The study recitation*

The coöperation of class and teacher to discover the main thought of a selection, the large parts into which it is divided, the various means the author uses in building up a delightful whole, emphasizing essentials, enjoying bits which make an especial appeal — this is a study recitation. The teacher needs to keep in mind that she is developing a method of study; at times she will make the pupil conscious of this also.

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

The thought whole is in the teacher's mind and helps her in directing the thought of the class. Mastery over form is likely to come in large measure during such work. The teacher uses the vocabulary of the author, at times she requires pupils to point to or read orally phrases or sentences which express the specific thought called for; the very fact that meaning is in control gives added power to the process of word recognition.

### *The silent reading lesson*

Here each pupil follows his own rate of speed in getting the message of the author, satisfies himself as to its meaning, realizes the companionship of the author. The teacher needs to assure herself that the pupil is really thinking as he reads, at times needs to challenge his mastery of a situation, again must direct him toward essentials. Questions may be assigned to direct the silent reading, pupils may be at liberty to rise and read choice snatches to the teacher and any classmates who wish to listen; in early grades they may act out in pantomime the sentences read silently. Bodily movements, facial expressions, the avidity with which new lessons are attacked, are good tests of what the pupil is gaining from these silent reading lessons.

## SOME SPECIAL METHODS

### *The appreciation lesson*

Certain poems need to be presented to the pupils first by the teacher's oral reading, so that the music and rhythm may be given as well as the thought. Books and short stories of high value, beyond the pupils' ability unless brought to them through the ear, also belong here. Ideals of oral reading are helped by these lessons, and a fine realization comes of the companionship to be found in books. The teacher must appreciate the responsibility of choosing this material wisely and of reading it appreciatively. At times those in the community who are specializing in reading will be glad to read to the children.

### *The dramatic reading*

Emphasis on oral reading when the thought is understood and the whole series of situations is in mind, assures a degree of finish in oral reading limited only by the capabilities of teacher and class. In this place movement must be brought out by the voice; in another place, emotion, perhaps of elemental passions, as joy, hatred, anger, fear; perhaps of more delicate emotions, generosity, self-control, loyalty. Delight comes with the ability to control the voice so as to represent different characters. There is need for develop-

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

ing a method of criticism by the class which shall hold the readers to increasingly higher standards.

Oral reading of poems calls for attention to rhythm, rhyme, well-chosen words, as well as to appreciation of the thought.

### *The dramatization*

Whether pupils eventually memorize the parts and give a dramatization for a special audience, with simple costumes and staging, or whether they only work out the dramatization in their own classroom, reading their lines from the book, the essential character of the dramatic presentation is the same. Each pupil by action, speech, or posture must convey his own interpretation of the character he is representing; together these characters must present the total situation, making the main thought so clear that no one can escape it. Attention to enunciation, pronunciation, and voice quality is important, for every member of the audience should hear with ease.

### *The drill, including the sight-reading lesson*

Carefully planned word and phrase drills (see p. 52) need to be given steadily in all grades. Not more than ten or fifteen minute periods should be given to such drills. Several types of drill may well be given in such a period.

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Every class needs training, also, in sight reading, not of material difficult in vocabulary and challenging thought too seriously, but of simple tales written in simple language. Let the new supplementary readers from a lower grade be used, each child selecting a story and reading it to the class. Much of the supplementary reading selected for a grade may be easy enough for this work.

### *The presentation of individual and group readings*

Material from the home libraries, chapters of books too long for classwork, may be assigned to individual pupils or groups to present to the class. These contributions may be read orally, or partly told and partly read. The teacher will need to hold pupils to worthy preparation for such lessons, parents may help by hearing the work read at home before it is presented at school. The fact that this material is new to the class assures an interested audience to lend motive to the reading.

For a more extended analysis of the larger purposes and types of literature suitable for elementary schools, the reader is referred to Chubb,<sup>1</sup> for a discussion of the types of lessons to Earhart.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Chubb's *The Teaching of English*, pp. 87-88, 143-47.

<sup>2</sup> Earhart's *Types of Teaching*.

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

### *Planning a series of lessons*

A selection will frequently call for a series of lessons of different types in order to insure the pupils' receiving due value from reading it; again a single lesson may be sufficient. Andersen's *The Constant Tin Soldier* may well begin with a study recitation in which the main situations are discovered, the characters discussed, movements and postures illustrated, and the climax appreciated. A second lesson may be in dramatic oral reading, especial attention being given to key sentences and conversational parts. A third lesson may consist in dramatizing, care being taken to have the class do the necessary planning and give helpful criticism. *The Walrus and the Carpenter* needs to be read first by the teacher, the absurdity being brought out and enjoyed by all. A second lesson may be a study recitation lesson if the teacher can guide the children in discovering more nonsense. Some oral reading of individual stanzas may be done in this lesson, but only to bring out the fun.

"Our methods will have to be fixed and yet flexible. We must have general plans of treatment; and yet these must always be guarded as subject to revision and as needing adaptation according to the class we are teaching. There are

## SOME SPECIAL METHODS

to be six lessons on this work; ten on that. Let the scope of these and of each of them be definitely worked out.

“There is no mechanism in this precision and planning. It is a condition of the highest kind of success. It is all in the interest of the spirit that giveth life. ‘Ah!’ we heard a young painter exclaim in the presence of a lovely piece of work by an elder, ‘have you ever seen him at it? See! he just daubs a thumbful of paint on the canvas and works with it, plays with it, until it just *sings*’; and that is what we are after in our craft too: To take just a few lines or many of a master, and thumb them and lip them until they ‘sing,’ and sing on, and recurringly sing. But to make either a great canvas or a great poem so sing, involves much dainty, bold, deliberative, patient work. We must plan, and yet the fire of feeling and admiration must survive and burn through our planning. But we insist on the definiteness of plan; on the elaboration that is itself true artistry.”

# READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

## SUGGESTIVE LESSON PLANS

*Plan for an informational selection to be given as a study recitation*

### THE CROW<sup>1</sup>

#### I

The crow has fine manners. He always has the walk and air of a lord of the soil.

One morning I put out some fresh meat upon the snow near my window. Soon a crow came and carried it off, and alighted with it upon the ground.

While he was eating of it, another crow came and, alighting a few yards away, slowly walked up to within a few feet of this fellow and stopped.

I expected to see a struggle over the food. Nothing of the kind happened, however. The feeding crow stopped eating, looked at the other for a moment, made a gesture or two, and flew away. Then the second crow went up to the food and began to eat. Soon the first crow came back, and then each of the crows seized a portion of the food and flew away with it. Their respect and good will for each other seemed perfect.

#### II

The crow will quickly discover anything that looks like a trap or snare set to catch him, but it takes him a long time to decide whether it is a snare or not.

<sup>1</sup> From *The Riverside Third Reader*. Copyright, 1911, by Houghton Mifflin Company. A specimen page from the *Reader* is here inserted.





Chickadees and woodpeckers would alight upon the meat and peck it swinging in the wind, but the crows were afraid.

Two days passed thus: every morning the two crows came and looked at the meat from all points in the tree, and then went away.

The third day I placed a large bone on the snow beneath the meat. Soon one of the crows appeared in the tree, and bent his eye upon the tempting bone. But, after looking at it for half an hour, and after coming several times within a few feet of it on the ground, he seemed



## SOME SPECIAL METHODS

I sometimes place meat for the crows on the snow in front of my study window. There were two crows that came to expect something there every day. Once, however, I hung a piece of meat by a string from a branch of the tree, just over the spot where I usually placed the food. A crow soon discovered it, and came into the tree to see what it meant. He felt sure that the meat was a trap to catch him.

He looked at it from every near branch. He pecked and pried. He flew to the ground, and walked about and looked at it from all sides.

Then he took a long walk, going away as if in hope of hitting upon some clew. Then he came to the tree again and tried first one eye, then the other, upon it; then he looked at the ground; then he went away and came back; then his fellow came, and they both squinted and looked at it, and then disappeared.

Chickadees and woodpeckers would alight upon the meat and peck it swinging in the wind, but the crows were afraid.

Two days passed thus: every morning the two crows came and looked at the meat from all points in the tree, and then went away.

The third day I placed a large bone on the snow beneath the meat. Soon one of the crows appeared in the tree, and bent his eye upon the tempting bone. But, after looking at it for half an hour, and after coming several times within a few feet of it on the ground, he seemed to think that there was no connection between it and the piece of meat hanging by the string.

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

So, finally, he walked up to it and fell to pecking it, flickering his wings all the time as a sign of his watchfulness. And, every little while, he would turn up his eye to the piece of meat in the air above.

Soon the other crow came and alighted on a low branch of the tree. The feeding crow looked up at him a moment, and then flew up to his side, as if to give him a turn at the bone. But the second crow refused to run the risk. He soon went away, and his friend followed him.

Then I placed the bone in one of the main forks of the tree, but the crows kept at a safe distance from it. Then I put it back on the ground, but they grew more and more afraid of it.

Finally, a dog carried off the bone, and the crow stopped visiting the tree.

JOHN BURROUGHS (*adapted*).

### *Teacher's aims —*

To have the pupils enjoy the author's observations of crows.

To train pupils to find the ideas presented to prove a point.

### *Pupils' aims —*

To find whether crows are interesting birds to watch.

To learn whether the author is a good guide in bird study.

## SOME SPECIAL METHODS

### *The teacher's part*

Here is Mr. Burroughs's account of the crow. How has he learned about crows?

Read some sentences which show that he has watched them.

Care needs to be taken that the sentences read really answer the question. The first sentence might be read, but is incomplete, — the meat might have been put out for some other purpose.

Have several pupils read sentences which tell.

How much of this account deals with crows which Mr. Burroughs has really seen?

What did Mr. Burroughs learn by watching the crows? Find the first sentence which tells.

Do you believe this? How does Mr. Burroughs prove it to you.

How much of the account is used to prove that crows have good manners?

Indicates on blackboard with some help from pupils: —

### *The Crow's Manners*

"The crow has fine ———  
——— seemed perfect."

(Page 230.)

What else did the author learn about crows by watching

### *The child's part*

He has watched them, fed them, thought about them.

"One morning I put out some fresh meat upon the snow near my study window. Soon a crow came and carried it off, and alighted with it upon the ground."

"I sometimes place meat for the crows on the snow, in front of my study window."

Read quickly, but silently, the entire selection, then express judgment.

"The crow has fine manners."

He watched the first crow share the food with the second.

All of part I. A pupil reads orally the first sentence and the last.

"The crow will quickly discover anything that looks like a

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

them? Read the sentence which tells.

trap or snare set to catch him, but it takes him a long time to decide whether it is a snare or not."

How long did the author watch to find this true?

Three days or more. We do not know when the dog carried off the bone and the crows stopped visiting the tree.

What behavior of the crows seemed to show that they were afraid?

Children may tell or may read specific sentences.

Was this a trap? Prove your point.

No.  
Only a piece of meat hung by a string.  
Other birds pecked at it and swung upon it.

Was the bone a trap? Prove it.

No.  
One crow pecked at it.  
The dog carried it away.

What did the crow think? Prove it. (This involves the whole question as to what we may infer from the behavior of animals as to their thinking. Let the pupils know that this is not yet decided.)

Would you like to watch crows alone? with Mr. Burroughs? Why?

He is kind to them; sees interesting things; thinks about what he sees.

Indicate on blackboard:—

### *The Crow's Belief in Traps*

"The crow will quickly discover —— stopped visiting the tree."

(Pages 231-33.)



## THE BURIED TREASURE

Antonius Pinto was the possessor of an olive orchard, and also of three stalwart but lazy sons.

Antonius tended his olive trees with but little help from his sons. Any morning before the sun grew hot, he could be found up on the hillside, propping the young trees or pruning the old ones; or digging about the roots, loosening and stirring the soil; or, in harvest time, with a score of neighbors to help him, plucking the firm, round fruit.

And any afternoon, toward sundown, he could be found on the hillside, resting in the orchard shade. Here he would lie and gaze across the hills of his beloved Italy — across to where the blue of the distant mountains met the blue of the sky. Slowly his eyes would wander back over hills gray-green with olive trees, to a nearer hill slope where, in the midst of its vineyards, the monastery stood. He could hear the vesper bell calling the monks to prayer.

“Now will they rest from their labors,” he would say to himself, thinking how, early and late, the monks had been working in the vineyards. Only constant care — turning the soil and pruning the vines — had made the monastery grapes the finest in all Italy.



## SOME SPECIAL METHODS

*Plan for a short story to be given as a silent reading lesson*

### THE BURIED TREASURE<sup>1</sup>

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Antonius tended his olive trees with but little help from his sons. Any morning before the sun grew hot, he could be found up on the hillside, propping the young trees or pruning the old ones; or digging about the roots, loosening and stirring the soil; or, in harvest time, with a score of neighbors to help him, plucking the firm, round fruit.

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Riverside Fourth Reader*. Copyright, 1912, by Houghton Mifflin Company. A specimen page from the *Reader* is here inserted.

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

Then Antonius would look at his own hillside, at the old trees with their gnarled and twisted branches, that had borne fruit so many years; and he would sigh to think that he was growing old and could no longer give them all the care they needed.

"Ah, yes," he would say with a shake of his head, "if my sons would but work as I have done, what a yield there would be from this olive slope!"

There came a time when Antonius no longer worked among his olive trees, a time when he, too, could rest — the long, long rest — from his labors.

His three sons gathered to hear the reading of his will. "I bequeath to my sons my olive orchard and equal shares in the treasure that lies buried therein" — so it was written. The three sons stared at one another in astonishment.

"Treasure! Treasure buried in the orchard!" they exclaimed excitedly. "If we set others to digging there, our treasure may be found and stolen from us. No, we must work in the orchard ourselves until we find it."

So the sons divided the orchard into three parts and began to work as they had never worked before. From tree to tree they went, digging carefully around the roots of each, and even in the spaces between the rows, until they had upturned the soil of the whole orchard. But no treasure could they find.

That year, however, a strange thing happened. The olive trees bore so heavily that it was necessary to support the limbs. Never was such a harvest of

## SOME SPECIAL METHODS

olives seen before! The three sons sold them at a good price, and the third that each received seemed to him a fortune in itself.

As they were dividing the money, taking each his share, one of them said suddenly, —

“Verily, our digging has brought us treasure! Our father was very wise.”

And year after year they dug in the orchard, as their father had done before them. And year after year the orchard yielded its treasure.

*An Italian Folk Tale.*

*Teacher's aims —*

To help the pupils to an intelligent enjoyment of the story.

To test their ability to get the thought and to relate it to their own experiences.

*Caution —* A silent reading lesson is not a preparation for oral reading, it should be complete in itself.

*Pupils' aim —*

To enjoy a story.

### *The teacher's part*

Write questions on blackboard, tell pupils to be ready to answer them. When sufficient time has passed, walk through the aisles asking questions quietly here and there. Do not confine yourself to the written questions.

### *The child's part*

Read the story. Read the questions and give the teacher answers when she asks for them. Ask the teacher questions if any point is not clear.

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

What was the buried treasure?  
What made the sons go to work?  
When did Antonius rest?  
When did the monks rest?  
When ought the sons to have  
begun working in the olive or-  
chard?

Was the father wise? the sons?  
the monks?

What picture in the story do  
you like best?

Some answers to this last ques-  
tion may be given for the benefit  
of all, and may close the lesson.

*Plan for a long story to be given as a dramatic  
reading*

### THE LITTLE STEAM ENGINE<sup>1</sup>

A little steam engine had a long train of cars to pull.

She went along very well till she came to a steep hill. But then, no matter how hard she tried, she could not move the long train of cars.

She pulled, and she pulled. She puffed, and she puffed. She backed and started off again. Choo! Choo! Choo! Choo! —

But no! the cars would not go up the hill.

At last she left the train and started up the track alone. Do you think she had stopped working? No, indeed! She was going for help.

"Surely I can find some one to help me," she thought.

<sup>1</sup> From *The Riverside Second Reader*. Copyright, 1911, by Houghton Mifflin Company. A specimen page from the *Reader* is inserted at page 98.

## SOME SPECIAL METHODS

Over the hill and up the track went the little steam engine. Choo, choo! Choo, choo! Choo, choo! Choo, choo! —

Pretty soon she saw a big steam engine standing on a side track. He looked very big and strong. Running alongside, she looked up and said, —

“Will you help me over the hill with my train of cars? It is so long and so heavy that I can’t get it over.”

The big steam engine looked down at the little steam engine. Then he said, —

“Don’t you see that I am through my day’s work? I have been all rubbed and scoured ready for my next run. No, I cannot help you.”

The little steam engine was sorry, but she went on. Choo, choo! Choo, choo! Choo, choo! Choo, choo! —

Soon she came to a second big steam engine standing on a side track. He was puffing and puffing, as if he were tired.

“He may help me,” thought the little steam engine. She ran alongside and asked, —

“Will you help me bring my train of cars over the hill? It is so long and so heavy that I can’t get it over.”

The second big steam engine answered, —

“I have just come in from a long, long run. Don’t you see how tired I am? Can’t you get some other engine to help you this time?”

“I’ll try,” said the little steam engine; and off she went. Choo, choo! Choo, choo! Choo, choo! Choo, choo! —

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

After a while she came to a little steam engine just like herself. She ran alongside and said, —

“Will you help me over the hill with my train of cars? It is so long and so heavy that I can’t get it over.”

“Yes, indeed!” said the second little steam engine. “I’ll be glad to help you, if I can.”

So the little steam engines started back to where the train of cars had been standing all this time. One little steam engine went to the head of the train, and the other to the end of it.

Puff, puff! Chug, chug! Choo, choo! — Off they started!

Slowly the cars began to move. Slowly they climbed the steep hill. As they climbed, each little steam engine began to sing: —

“I — think — I — can! I — think — I — can! I — think — I — can! I — think — I — can! I — think — I — can! I — think — I — can! I think I can — I think I can — I think I can — I think I can —”

And they did! Very soon, they were over the hill and going down the other side.

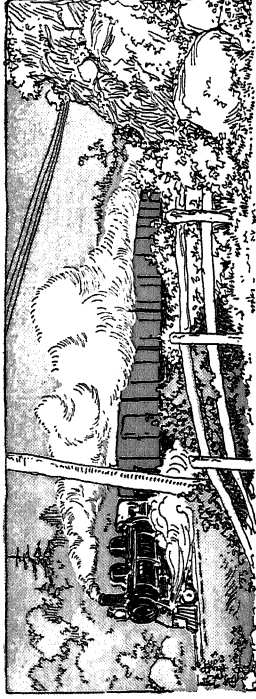
Now they were on the plain again; and the little steam engine could pull her train, herself. So she thanked the little engine who had come to help her, and said good-bye.

And as she went merrily on her way, she sang to herself, —

“I — thought — I — could! I — thought — I —



And they did! Very soon, they were over the hill and going down the other side.



Now they were on the plain again ; and the little steam engine could pull her train, herself. So she thanked the little engine who had come to help her, and said good-bye.

And as she went merrily on her way, she sang to herself, —

"I - thought - I - could!    I - thought - I -  
could!    I - thought - I - could!    I - thought -  
I - could!    I thought I could — I thought I  
could — I thought I could — I thought I could  
— I thought I could I thought I could —"



## SOME SPECIAL METHODS

could! I — thought — I — could! I — thought — I — could! I thought I could — I thought I could — I thought I could — I thought I could — I thought I could — I thought I could —”

### *Teacher's aims —*

To help pupils to enjoy the story.

To train them to read it orally, especially the most expressive parts, so as to give pleasure.

### *Pupils' aim —*

To read the story so that others will like it.

#### *The teacher's part*

This little steam engine acts like a person. She has several adventures. Let us find what happens to her first to make her think.

Show how the engine acted in this part.

Read the sentence which shows she could not move the cars after all.

Read silently all the part that tells about her going for help and how the first big steam engine treated her. One may be the little steam engine, one the big

#### *The child's part*

Finds the sentences which tell that she could not move the cars up the hill.

Went along very well.

Came to hill, could not move cars.

Pulled and pulled.

Puffed and puffed.

Backed and started off again.

Choo! Choo! Choo! Choo!

“But no! the cars would not go up the hill.”

“Surely I can find some one to help me.”

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

steam engine, and act this part, reading the needed conversation.

"Choo, choo! Choo, choo!  
Choo, choo! Choo, choo!"

"Will you help me?" etc.

"Don't you see?" etc.

"Choo, choo! Choo, choo!  
Choo, choo! Choo, choo!"

Treat the adventure with the second big engine in the same way.

There are two parts to the adventure with the little steam engine, — (1) the little engine agrees to help and they go back together; (2) together they pull the cars up the hill.

How fast do the engines sing at first? Sing the first part of their song. (This should sound like an engine's "Choo, choo!")

"I — think — I — can! I —  
think — I — can!"

How fast do they sing at the last? Show us.

"I think I can! I think I can!"  
Several children give the entire song changing from slow to fast and to faster rates.

Where does this part end?

"and said good-bye."

How is the second song of the engine like her first song? Sing this one.

It begins slowly and grows faster and faster.

Several children give this song, changing their rate of speed as the song progresses.

Assign each part to a pupil to read. Be sure that each knows where his part begins and where it ends.

Children decide whether they can see the engines under the varying conditions and whether the speeches are well given.

Work for contrast in the voices when different conditions are portrayed.

"She puffed and she puffed."

"He was puffing and puffing, as if he were tired."

"Puff, puff!"

## SOME SPECIAL METHODS

*Plan for a poem of child life to be given as an  
appreciation lesson*

### WHERE GO THE BOATS?

*Teacher's aim —*

To picture the child sailing his boats and give his thoughts about them.

*Pupils' aim —*

To hear a poem about a little boy sailing boats.

This poem is about a little boy who lived near a river. One of his favorite plays was sailing boats on the river. First he gives us a picture of the river.

“Dark brown is the river,  
Golden is the sand.  
It flows along for ever  
With trees on either hand.”

As he puts his boats into the stream, he sees other things floating, green leaves and water bubbles.

“Green leaves a-floating,  
Castles of the foam,  
Boats of mine a-boating — ”

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

and then he wonders —

“Where will all come home?”

He watches and watches as they sail, asking himself that question —

“Where will all come home?”

He sees the river moving steadily on —

“On goes the river

And out past the mill,

Away down the valley,

Away down the hill.”

Then he thinks that other children like to sail boats on the river. He imagines that some children a long way off may watch the river, and may find the boats he is sending out on the river.

“Away down the river,

A hundred miles or more,

Other little children

Shall bring my boats ashore.”

Would you like to find his boats?

The teacher reads the poem a second time without comment.

## V

### THE RECITATION PERIOD AND THE STUDY PERIOD

#### *Variety during the reading period*

THE thinking which the pupil does in response to the printed page is the test of the value of his work. In part his thinking is determined by his motive in reading, in part by his own efforts at interpretation. There is also a coöperative phase. Through hearing the interpretations of his mates and his teacher, and by presenting to them his point of view, his own motives become clearer and his thinking becomes richer. The purpose of the reading recitation is to provide an atmosphere conducive to rich thinking.

We are beginning to realize that the responsibility for the recitation must be placed more and more upon the pupils themselves. This includes the machinery of the recitation as well as its content. A few concrete cases will indicate the various ways in which the children may assume a larger share of work. A fourth-grade class, with a leader of its own selection, discusses the lesson,

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

finding the significant parts and commenting upon the characters. The members of a fifth grade, with little suggestion from the teacher, call on one another for opinions, ask for those sentences or paragraphs which prove a given point, and compare characters by reading the descriptions given of each or the remarks by which each character shows his views. The pupils of a third-grade class have prepared questions on the text which they now ask one another, the answers being given by reading from the lesson. A second grade has divided the lesson into parts. A child names a part and reads the amount which he considers that his title covers. Again, drawings have been made as seatwork of some pictures or events in the story. A drawing is shown, and the children search for the sentence or paragraph which it illustrates. A group of children arrange a pantomime to illustrate some part of the story, or each child illustrates some action in the story. In either case the one who guesses reads to the class the part which he thinks illustrated.

### *The teacher's place*

There is always a place for the teacher in a recitation, even when the pupils are trained to

## RECITATION AND STUDY

assume large responsibility. Her wider experience makes it possible for her to ask questions and offer comments which are stimulating to the class. She may need to interrupt so as to prevent the discussion from wandering off into trivialities, to give the timid child a chance, and to prod the lazy. At times the whole recitation must remain largely in her hands. The more she trains her class into habits of assuming responsibility and of exercising initiative, the larger will be the return in thinking which is worth while. Moreover, by careful observation she will discover the phases of reading in which her pupils need special training. Are they bothered by word forms? Drills may be necessary. Do they have trouble in discovering essentials? Study recitations will remedy this. Is their reading slipshod? Appreciation lessons may set new ideals.

### *What not to do*

A certain group of trivial errors have at times been given undue prominence in the minds of teachers, causing unnecessary nervousness and irritability because their origin is not understood. When the pupil is reading orally he frequently omits unessential words and substitutes synonyms for the words of the text. Both of these

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

practices are perfectly natural, and in general should cause little concern. Huey says, "If he grasps, approximately, the total meaning of the sentence in which the new word stands, he has read the sentence. . . . If the child substitutes words of his own for some that are on the page, provided that these express the meaning, it is an encouraging sign that the reading has been real."<sup>1</sup> So, too, wrong habits of enunciation and pronunciation cannot be thrown off in a moment. The teacher who struggles too long over a single pupil's mispronunciation might better make a vigorous attack in a private lesson. She needs to be sure she understands the laws of habit formation. Class difficulties of this type should be met in drill periods. Later it will be wise to commend the correct use of a word which has been drilled upon in this way. So growth is tested and encouraged.

### *Linking the recitation to the assignment*

Many reading recitations suggest questions which can be answered only by further study, comparisons which call for review of material previously read, activities which are a natural outgrowth of the thinking done in class, and

<sup>1</sup> Huey, *op. cit.*, p. 349.

## RECITATION AND STUDY

thoughts which call for reflection. Thus the class helps in making the assignment for the study period. The study recitation bridges the gap between the recitation and the study period. Gradually the pupil learns to go from his class to his study with definite plans for carrying further the thinking of the reading recitation.

### *The study period*

Concentration upon the work to be done, reasonable speed in accomplishing it, results which prove to be a real contribution to the class recitation, — these are obvious characteristics of the study period. Pupils should be trained to go to work promptly. The conditions which interrupt their study should be remedied. The assignment should be clear, definite, and of reasonable length. Like the seat work of little children, the study problems of older pupils may alternate between problems of thought and those of form. Their study may deal with a lesson already given or with a new one.

Whatever task is assigned for the study period should first have been worked out in a study recitation. A lesson is given in finding the important characters in a story, in learning what kind of people they are. Pupils verify their judgments

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

by reading passages which show what the characters said and did, what others said to them or about them, and what the author definitely said they were. A form for indicating these passages needs to be taught.<sup>1</sup> When another story is taken, the pupils may be assigned such work at their seats. Perhaps separate characters may be assigned to different groups of pupils.

There should be definite growth in power to study intelligently. Some problem, method of analysis, or added enjoyment should give zest to each study period. Each year's work should add to the pupil's ability to read silently at a more rapid rate and with a better degree of understanding. It should assist him to get the book's message with greater economy of time and effort, and to be more certain of recalling what he has gained from it.<sup>2</sup>

### *Seat work related to reading*

Little of the seat work which is used has much educational value. The teacher needs to be watchful that assigned seatwork does not become routine in character. If it does it will fail to chal-

<sup>1</sup> See page 16.

<sup>2</sup> See Keith's *Elementary Education*, pp. 179-82; McMurry's *How to Study*; Earhart's *Teaching Children to Study*.

## RECITATION AND STUDY

lunge the child's ability as a problem worthy of his time and thought and energy. Activity, bodily movement should be utilized in far greater degree than is usually done, but should be directed toward worthy ends.

A group of children, one of whom is made leader, may well spend a study period in dramatizing a story in hall or cloakroom, or in working out on the sand-table a representation of the scenes in the story. When pupils work at their seats, as in copying with letter cards or in drawing a picture, it is necessary to have some pupils read what they have copied or tell what they have drawn. This acts as a check, showing that the work is the child's own, not copied from his neighbor. It also adds to his feeling of its worth.

### *Leading to thought mastery*

#### *Pictures in the story*

Draw on paper or at blackboard, cut, lay with sticks or lentils.

Copy with letter cards a sentence which gives a picture.

#### *People in the story*

Draw, cut, lay with sticks.

Copy names with letter cards, copy one thing each said, one thing each did.

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

Find and lay with letter cards, words or word groups which give color, sound, movement, time, place.

When children have gained some independence in reading, they can find in the story answers to questions. *What does the wind sing? What do the birds sing? What do the bees sing?*

In second grade they may draw a picture from the story, the class to guess and read the sentence or paragraph illustrated.

### *Leading to word mastery*

#### *Associating idea with word*

Material — pictures of common objects, names of objects on small cards.

Children place names beside pictures they represent.

#### *Associating isolated word with word in sentence*

Material — words of lesson on small cards.

Children arrange words to make sentences of lesson.

#### *Emphasizing phonic elements*

Material — letter cards.

Children find and copy with letter cards rhyming words in lesson; words whose sounds they enjoy giving; words beginning with a certain sound; words containing a certain phonogram.

## RECITATION AND STUDY

### *Emphasizing dominant letters or syllables*

Material — letter cards.

Teacher writes words on board, erasing lower half of each word; children find words in reader and lay with letter cards. Teacher writes dominant letters or syllables of words, using dashes for letters omitted; children find words in readers and lay with letter cards.

### *Emphasizing known words*

Material — advertisements in good print on good paper.

Children cut out words which they know, pasting them in booklets. Each page may represent one letter of the alphabet.

### *Help from the home*

The home can make its best contribution through companionship in the joys of reading. When parents and children share charming stories, beautiful poems, and stimulating information, the pupil has a larger contribution to make to the recitation, and finds added opportunity for using the ideas gained in the recitation.

Again the home carries a large responsibility in the choice and amount of reading material at the children's disposal. To supply a child with

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

his own library of books and magazines, to encourage his browsing in the home library, to introduce him in due time to the children's department of the public library, — these are the duties and opportunities of parents. Perhaps greater care in the choice of material is more essential at present than emphasis on a greater amount. This is especially true of books placed in the hands of six- and seven-year-olds. These are too often both crude and unchildlike. Teachers and librarians can help parents who wish direction in the choice of books.

Some children are greatly benefited by reading aloud to parents or other members of the family. A child who gains a rapid reading rate early may need to be questioned regarding the thought of his books. Practice is important, and the school may not be able to furnish enough. By consulting with the teacher, the parent may discover whether a child needs more practice in oral reading or more practice in reflecting upon what he reads. By visiting the class, the parent may learn how his child's reading compares with that of the group.

The home can also help by seeing that all defects of teeth, eyes, ears, nose, and throat are remedied so far as possible; that baby talk is

## **RECITATION AND STUDY**

never permitted to become habitual; that correct enunciation and pronunciation are established in daily conversation; and, finally, that sweet, clear voices are developed by habitual usage.

## VI

### THE TEACHER'S ATTITUDE TOWARD RESULTS

#### *The need for standard tests in reading*

THE reading ability of a child may be measured by comparison with that of adults, or with that of his mates, or with his own past effort. The reading ability of a class may be measured in the same ways, due allowance always being made for individual differences. Teachers are developing the various phases of reading ability from day to day; they need to be able to give fair tests to discover the attainments of the children. Supervisors, too, have need for testing, although their largest problem is to lead teachers to appreciate the larger viewpoints in the work. The development of standard tests in reading is a problem solution of which has begun.

Thorndike names four types of ability in reading which need measurement: "(1) a pupil's ability to pronounce words and sentences seen; (2) a pupil's ability to understand the meaning of words and sentences seen; (3) a pupil's ability to appreciate and enjoy what we roughly call 'good literature,' and (4) a pupil's ability to read orally,

## ATTITUDE TOWARD RESULTS

clearly and effectively.”<sup>1</sup> He offers a first rough scale for measuring (1) and gives detailed studies for measuring (2), with the promise that other standards will be developed.

### *The problem of the new class*

Upon receiving a new class, a teacher is likely to underestimate their reading ability. A common practice is to spend some time in review; the better way is to begin at once with new material, reviewing when the class has had experiences in common with the new teacher. One teacher will rejoice over the words and phonic elements which the children remember, inspiring them to recall others; another will dwell upon those they have forgotten, discouraging them from the start. Success is too valuable a tonic for us to invite defeat by fault-finding. Children should be happy in their reading work even if the teacher does feel discouraged. By working bravely even with a slow class, and there are many such classes, steady growth may be secured.

### *Reading in relation to promotion*

Under ordinary conditions a child should pass regularly from grade to grade, except when ill-

<sup>1</sup> Thorndike's "The Measurement of Ability in Reading," *Teachers College Record*, September, 1914.

## READING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

ness, a period of slow mental growth, or other exceptional condition warrants retention in the grade. A certain skill in reading may be expected, within limits, upon the completion of each grade. A first-grade child should have a reasonable stock of sight words which he is able to read in simple thought relations. He should also have made a beginning in using phonics in getting new words. Without these he is not ready for the second grade. Upon leaving the second grade a child should be quite self-helpful in getting new words both by phonics and by the help of the context. He should be able to read a little in connection with the other school subjects, enough, at least, so that he can follow simple directions. Upon leaving the third grade pupils should be fluent readers of simple reading material. They ought to be able to discuss the main thought, the larger parts, and the chief characters. By the time they leave the fourth grade good study habits should be well under way, and these should be well established before the end of the fifth grade.

### *The pupil who does not learn to read*

Even with good teaching an occasional child will not learn to read, while the shifting of our population brings to every schoolroom some child

## ATTITUDE TOWARD RESULTS

far behind children of his age. Give all such pupils individual assignments of one or two sentences. Let them have as much help as they need in preparation, but hold them for results of some kind. Call on them to contribute to the thought side of the recitation; their experiences may make them valuable helpers here. Let them make lists of the words and word-groups which they know. Occasionally such pupils may go to lower grades for word drills, but their social relation to the younger group may not be an incentive to good reading there.

### *The final test*

The great test of reading is the use to which pupils put it in the course of their life activities. Are they turning to good literature for companionship? Have they begun to have favorite authors? Do they visit the library or read for pleasure in their own homes? To what extent are they hunting for information in books and magazines of worth? Are they judging its worth, taking the best which is offered? Only as their reading serves some vital purpose, helps in making them intelligent and serviceable members of social groups, is the work in reading a success.



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